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• (1640)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC)):
Good afternoon, everyone.

I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 89 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, a.k.a. the ongoing OGGO.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), the committee is meeting to resume consideration of a request for contracts between the federal government and electric vehicle battery manufacturing companies.

I remind you to keep your headphones away from the microphone. When it is too close, it causes feedback and potential injury to our very valued interpreters.

When the meeting adjourned yesterday, an amendment had been moved by Mr. Sousa, so we are resuming debate on the amendment by Mr. Sousa.

I am starting a speaking order. I see Mr. Sousa, Mr. Genuis, Ms. Vignola and Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Sousa, the floor is yours.

Mr. Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As mentioned in our discussions yesterday and throughout the day today, we put forward an amendment, notwithstanding some of the comments already made, to protect the interests and integrity of this investment. It's to ensure that when we track foreign direct investment, we do so in a manner that enables the stakeholders and parties involved to have confidence in the measures put in place and in the confidentiality of those contracts. This enables us to then compete for other investments.

Notwithstanding some of the comments made that the shareholders—in this case the taxpayers, which I agree with.... However, in normal practice, even in a public sector corporation or a private corporation.... After 25 years in the private sector and having been on seven boards and involved in a number of acquisitions and measures to attract investments into Canada, I am always concerned about putting at risk the opportunity to attract even more, given the complexities and some of the sensitivities of these contracts. Some of the mechanisms in these contracts have triggers to protect the interests of shareholders, who are the taxpayers in this case. We have taken those precautions. We want to be able to share that informa-

tion with members of this committee, but we want to do so in a way that protects the integrity and sensitivity of those contracts because of other potential investments coming to Canada.

The amendment enables us to review the contracts in detail. It enables us to dig into the particulars. It will allow us to see some of the triggers. It will also protect the existence of new jobs coming to Canada and to Windsor, particularly. Certainly, the president of Unifor has been very clear that disrupting this investment—its disclosure—puts at risk some of the opportunities for confidential matters they have also been engaged with. They're aware of what this requires.

The notion that we're giving foreign workers the ability to take jobs away from Canadians is also not necessarily correct because, when Canadians sell abroad, for example, a CANDU reactor or something of that sort, they bring forward some of the expertise and skill sets required to do the initial transition and construction of that facility, as it is here. However, we're also enabling a lot of skilled Canadian workers to be trained in some of these matters, as a result of the investment being made. It's also important to note that the initial investment, the first tranche of the \$3 billion to \$4 billion, is not from the taxpayers. We're there in the second play. This would be highlighted in the contract itself, which, again, would be available to the members to review.

We're also suggesting that it be reviewed in conjunction with representatives from Innovation, Science and Economic Development so that all of us can have a sense and an appreciation of what's being done.

However, to now suggest that we disclose the entire contract for public consumption gives other jurisdictions an opportunity to see what is being done and how competitive a nature Canada has in terms of attracting some of these investments. We are competing with other jurisdictions and territories around the world. The parties involved look to Canada and Canadians to ensure we protect their interests as a party to this contract.

I know Dave Cassidy, the union leader, is here today. They've had some discussions around this, and they're also perplexed and concerned about the integrity of what's being put forward and suggested by this committee, which would put at risk the possibility of future investments in the auto sector system.

• (1645)

The auto sector in Ontario and in Canada is prominent, and it's critical to the well-being of our economic recovery. It certainly was in 2008 when Ontario, including Canada, participated to facilitate and protect the interests of the auto sector. The Conservatives were actually opposed to it. Gladly, we were able to proceed through it notwithstanding to protect the industry in Ontario and in Canada. Of course, there are billions of dollars of trade daily going through in the production and establishment of these very high-paying, skilled jobs. Many permanent jobs are going to be established as a result of this investment for Canadian workers.

The amendments are also somewhat of a compromise in allowing some of the full disclosures in camera, so people can appreciate what that means. It's appropriate, I think. I would implore the members opposite to appreciate that you'll be seeing the sensitivities of the contracts, at the same time protecting the interests of the parties involved. One of those parties involved is the Conservatives from the Ontario government. The other parties involved, of course, are the companies themselves.

I would like to remind the committee of some of the comments that are being made not just by our group here in this committee, but members outside the committee. When I read and look at what is being put forward by others, it actually makes very clear that the game being played is risking the very opportunity of Canada to be competitive. The work that's being proposed or suggested here puts Canadians and the government, including all of us, in a situation that precludes the ability, I would say, for those parties that have protection measures to be exposed. It's contrary to the very issue I think the members opposite would want.

I look at the recent article by Lana Payne where she has the notion that the "firestorm", as she puts it, "started as an innocuous social media post". That's what's happening here. People are using this misinformation as a means to promote YouTube and promote themselves in such a way, at the expense of others, and putting at risk.... She says that it all "started as an innocuous social media post from, of all groups, the Windsor Police Service [to] become a fire-and-brimstone level debate in this country." She goes on to say, "It's not everyday the police find themselves making major industrial job announcements in this country", but it was cryptic, suggesting—unsubstantiated—that some "1,600 South Korean [workers] were coming to 'work and live' in Canada".

Well, we have the ability right now with the amendments being put forward for you to review and discuss and see exactly how that is.

Lana Payne goes on to say, "Don't misunderstand me", and then that the police tweet is actually rather head-scratching. Furthermore, she says, "Anyone who knows anything about the start-up of major industrial projects knows that it takes a lot of different people, in many different jobs, to pull these things together", and that it was unclear, precisely, what jobs were being referred to.

Let's make it clear by having the members opposite review it, but let's be certain that we don't then expose the other competitive sensitivities of this deal to other potential investors in other competitive jurisdictions.

Furthermore, she goes on to say, it "didn't stop the misinformation mill from working overtime." She went on to say, "Rather than investigate the claim, every Tom, Dick, and Harry in this country decided to form an instant opinion on the matter." That's the problem. People are jumping to conclusions and making accusations and standing by them without having misinformed.... It's just like when they said there was a terrorist attack on the Niagara bridge when, in fact, that wasn't the case. You can't just jump to that conclusion and recklessly say something and then find yourself having to backtrack.

I'm suggesting we don't backtrack at all. Let's review the documents in better conditions.

• (1650)

She went on to say, "Federal opposition critics cried bloody murder—outraged that foreign workers are coming here to take away promised Canadian jobs." The ringleader of that circus, as she calls it, wants a national inquiry into the matter. We don't need a national inquiry. We have the ability to inquire into it right here amongst ourselves and enable you to see it without exposing the conditions that put us at risk. She went on to say, "For one thing, there is nothing new about Canadian firms leaning on foreign professionals when launching new industrial projects."

That is so true. We have a lot of investments. In the 20 years that I was in the private sector finding and supporting business that are attracting and building plants and investing in Canadians.... These are Canadian partners. Of course they're using foreign machinery and acquisitions. They bring in some foreign workers and management in that transition. In the long term, it's for great Canadian benefit and grows our economy, just as, as I said, when Canadians sell abroad.

She went on to say, "Anyone who has spent half-a-second studying the auto industry knows there isn't a single, mass-scale battery cell production facility operating in Canada." It doesn't exist. There's nothing to support what is necessary, because we don't even know ourselves. This is a brand new concept and brand new facility. She said, "This is the reason Stellantis opted for a joint venture with LG Energy in the first place, to tap into this technical expertise."

She further goes on to say, "This is no different than what happens during a new vehicle product launch. In fact, teams of U.S. workers were temporarily brought over the border to help get the GM Ingersoll plant up and running and building new EV delivery vans. This plant also received substantial government investment. No one batted an eye." Why is that? Why is it that all of a sudden this one is of consequence whereas the other ones from our U.S. counterparts are not? It is the same idea.

She said, “When the news first broke, our union committed to investigate. What we learned is that, yes, there will be a team of hundreds of Korean workers temporarily coming to Canada to install equipment and machinery. Not 1,600, as reported by the police. And, no, these workers will not be working permanently in the plant. Nor will these jobs count toward the promised 2,500 direct jobs. In an ironic twist, we’ve learned the program through which NextStar is transferring these Korean nationals into Canada—that has the Conservatives up in arms—exists only because of the Canada-Korea Free Trade Agreement—an agreement negotiated and signed by the Conservatives themselves back in 2014.” This existence is as a result and enabling this, so we needed that support.

She said, “Unifor was among the few groups vocally opposed to the Korea deal at the time, warning it would do further damage to an already ailing Canadian auto industry.”

The industry has strengthened since. We at various government levels took positions to support the industry. It was a symbolic blow at the time that blamed job losses, but those plant closures and possible extinction were at risk, and we don't want that to be the case today.

By opening up these contracts, by putting forth some of what's being proposed in the manner in which it's being suggested puts at risk that very issue. She said, “Now, either Poilievre and his Conservatives had a political epiphany about manufacturing jobs, or they’ve got terrible memories. Either way they are officially talking out of both sides of their mouths. It’s embarrassing, quite frankly, the tenor of political debate on this issue.”

The motivation is not about protecting Canadian jobs, and it's not being seen as protecting the industry. It is being seen as supporting their own political disability. They're promoting themselves as though there's something of consequence here, when all they're really trying to do is promote themselves and not protect the industry that we're trying to support.

She further said, “And it’s doing a disservice to all of us who have been scratching and clawing to rebuild the auto industry into the powerhouse it once was—no thanks to harmful Conservative trade policy or economic ideology. Yes, there are major problems in Canada with hugely exploitative migrant worker programs. These problems deserve the same degree of political passion and attention that’s on display right now.”

That's why, in the contract, we make reference to some of the labour market agreements. I believe that the Bloc and the NDP were concerned about those very issues and language rights. Again, those are issues that we need to review and revise, and we want to make that clear. That will be made clear, even including the amendments that this side of the table has, but that doesn't preclude that from being the case.

• (1655)

Had the situation really been about stealing away Canadian jobs, that's one thing, but that's not the case here. In fact, we wouldn't have the opportunity to have those permanent Canadian jobs if not for the investment being made. The fact that we're having some foreign workers coming to Canada to help with the implementation of

the plant doesn't preclude the fact that now we're going to have a lot of permanent jobs. The alternative is not to do it at all.

The consequence of the addition that they're suggesting—\$15 billion is the equation they're using—is done in parcels. The first tranche of \$3 billion to \$5 billion is coming from the foreign entity, not from Canadian taxpayers. We are being protected with the execution risk. A major risk in this proposal is the construction and development of the plant. The initial capital investment is huge. It's massive.

There is going to be subsequent support on an operating basis thereafter that's done in tandem with the creation of those permanent jobs. Then there's the revenue stream that's going to be coming into Canada and the taxes that it'll also provide to support Canadian taxpayers.

That'll be done subsequently. It's not being done all at once. It's certainly not being done by Canadians at the start. The risk is being assumed by the foreign entity. That is important to note.

Now, Lana Payne further says, “It’s embarrassing, quite frankly, the tenor of political debate...it's [also] doing a disservice to all of [those] who have been scratching and clawing to rebuild [this] industry.... Yes, there are major problems in Canada”, which we need to support in regard to the working....

Had the situation been around Canadian jobs not being provided, that's one thing, but they are being provided. They're not being stolen. No jobs are being taken away as a result of this investment.

She continues, “No one has more at stake in this matter than Canadian auto workers. This NextStar battery plant will provide jobs to help transition workers, including Unifor members, displaced in the EV shift. And it is the lynchpin for future EV assembly Unifor members will do in both Windsor and Brampton.”

We should and could have had greater opportunities in this investment had we had initial support as well. That is why we continue to foster this engagement. It's important that we do it at this time.

Frankly, it's a bit too late. I would have liked to see more of these EV investments from the get-go. In Ontario, we had a cap-and-trade system that had dollar-for-dollar reinvestment in green energy projects, by law. That cap-and-trade system was taken away by the Conservative government after they came into power in 2018. It's a disservice, initially, to these EV opportunities.

We're four years delayed in some of these enablements because it was secured when we were part of the western climate initiative between Quebec and California. We were netting about \$1.2 billion to \$1.9 billion. It was reinvestment in opportunities to grow our economy, grow the green economy and get ahead of the curve on these very factors. It's critical that we stay at the forefront.

If we don't find and encourage these investments, then we're just stepping back and letting the world get ahead of us. By disclosing these contracts, ensuring that you review them, and putting it out for public consumption, you are telling the very investment entities and the other jurisdictions that they can't trust the Canadian government. The Canadian government is just going to show everybody the deal.

What's important to share with the taxpayer and with the people of Ontario and Canada—one is being built here and the other one in Quebec—is that there will be initial requirements to share the job opportunities, the GDP growth and the net benefit to Canada. That net benefit is being done.

To the members opposite, you will have a chance to see it. You will have a chance to review it. You're going to see as you require it, but do not then put on public display the sensitivities of the competitive nature of those contracts and what we are doing.

As Lana Payne concludes, "NextStar battery plant will provide jobs to help transition workers, including Unifor members, displaced in the EV shift. And it is the lynchpin for future EV assembly Unifor members will do in both Windsor and Brampton. Without comparable government supports for battery plants as provided by the U.S, this plant would have been built south of the border."

● (1700)

That's the crux of this matter. You and this committee have a responsibility and a duty to Canadian taxpayers and to Canada to ensure that we protect the interests of Canadians and Canadian taxpayers by not letting the United States of America and those U.S. border states that are providing...in this competition to see exactly what came to be.

We know this, though. There is integrity and there is respect for the Canadian auto sector, because we participated and we partnered with them over the tough times and the challenging times. They need us to be there for them today.

What the members opposite are doing with regard to this motion is not supporting the Canadian taxpayer, the Canadian job market or the Canadian auto sector. They're actually doing the exact opposite. To suggest that in a world where the board has to be responsive to the shareholders.... That board in most private companies will not jeopardize the livelihoods of those shareholders by disclosing the sensitive information of the contracts being done in any acquisition, any merger or any investment.

What they will do is share the intent of the investment. They'll share the net benefit of the investment and they'll budget through the benefit over the long term. We've done that. That's being done here. What you're going to now do...what you're going to put at risk and what you're going to divulge are the very sensitive matters that the workers, the union workers at Unifor and the supply chains are relying upon. The mining sector that's also going to be looking at Ontario and Canadian supplies for these batteries.... Those are future investments that are going to go forward. You're not going to enable them.

Now, they'll say, "Oh, gosh. If we do this and we make these proper investments, we're going to have to show our competitors

what our margins and what our deal is, and then risk not competing effectively." You're acting no better than a monopoly. You're acting no better than a communist government. These guys are proposing to suggest that they're going to administer and control the deal. It's a market function. We're living in a democratic, market-competitive industry. Do not put that at risk. That is what you're doing.

Again, I remind the committee that we are going to allow the viewing of the documents. We're going to allow a review of the contracts. We're going to allow everyone to see exactly what takes place, with constraints and protection measures, so that when it goes to the public realm, you're not then going to put out that sensitive information for others to see and then take advantage of Canada and the Canadian supports that are being used to attract foreign direct investment.

Imagine. We are now at the top three in FDIs, foreign direct investments, around the world. This area of southern Ontario is probably about 50% to 60% of the Canadian GDP. The auto sector represents a huge part of Canada's GDP, and now you want to play around as though you're suggesting that this is nothing and everybody should be aware of it. Everybody should be sensitive to what is being done.

I agree that we should have awareness of the deal. We have made that clear. However, even small business transactions and small investments...they will not want to share, for example, the construction of a building or a real estate project with other contractors. They'll put it out to RFPs. They'll attract 10 or 12 contractors and suppliers to bid on the deal, and the best will take it. We've done that here.

If you open it up, you're giving the other competitors the opportunity to say, "Well, wait a minute. That's how it's played. That's what they've done. That is what we have to tweak."

● (1705)

We need them to do that on their own, we need them to be competitive. We can't allow Canadians and Canada to be taken advantage of for that purpose. And it will end up costing all of us that much more.

She goes on to say that in "today's politics, why should the facts get in the way of a good story?" I think that's a great conclusion here. So much of what I've been hearing, certainly in this committee and throughout some of the antics in the House, is misinformation.

There has been constant misinformation and misdirection. On the one hand, I hear the leader of the Conservative Party talking about investing, trying to explain to an audience in Toronto on Bay Street in an economic club the merits of quantitative easing, to somehow reflect on monetary policy after his Bitcoin debacle. In fact, all he did was read from a script and then he misinformed himself because he didn't know what he was talking about. By doing this, you're reinforcing your lack of sensitivity, lack of understanding in multi-billion dollar transactions and investments into this country.

If you do this in the way that's being proposed without the amendments being suggested...because the amendments add those protections, while still allowing members opposite and elsewhere to review it and to give themselves the necessary information to protect their own assumptions, because that's all it is at this point. Fine, let's determine what the reality is. Let's determine what the truth is and then speak with greater confidence, instead of making it up. All you've done at this point is created fear, created division, created uncertainty in the industry and in the marketplace, and that is a dis-service to Canada and to Canadian taxpayers.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will go to Mr. Genuis, please.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We've just heard the former finance minister under Kathleen Wynne talk for half an hour about transparency and economic management, and I would just briefly encourage the listening public to consider the source.

I will be brief in my comments, because I think the positions of all of the parties are very clear at this point and I think it's time for the committee to pronounce itself one way or the other.

Conservatives are looking at the fact that over \$40 billion are earmarked to be spent on corporate subsidies, and we believe that in such cases the people who are working hard and paying the taxes that go into those subsidies deserve to see the contract. That's a simple principle we will stand on that when you have massive corporate subsidies involved, there's a certain basic amount of information that the people who are paying for those subsidies deserve to get to see, especially when we're talking now about a situation in which a large amount of the jobs ostensibly being created by this spending are jobs for foreign workers, not Canadians.

The members of the government say, "We're doing awesome. These are great. We're really happy with what a great job we're doing." That's what the government will tell you. We've said, "Show your work, then. If you're happy with what you're doing, if you think these contracts are great, if you think the way you structured these deals is defensible, then show your work."

The government does not want to show their work. We favour transparency; they don't. The amendment the former Kathleen Wynne finance minister from Ontario has proposed is about trying to bury this information. It talks about hiding documents, no notes being able to be taken, copies of documents being destroyed. That's the Liberal approach. They want to bury this issue. They want us to believe they're proud of their work, but they do not want the public to see their work. We think that's dead wrong. We believe in transparency. We don't want to let these corrupt Liberals hide the nature of the deal they've made, we believe the public should get to see it.

Mr. Chair, you know our position. You know their position. We're ready for a vote.

• (1710)

The Chair: Colleagues, are we interested in going to a vote right now?

Ms. Vignola, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Thank you very much.

From the outset, I would like to make it clear that the request to see the contracts is in no way a motion to blame the companies. We were elected by people who put their trust in us, and we must work for them to continue to earn that trust.

As my colleague said, questions have been asked, particularly on social networks, about decisions that deserve clarification. I see the great potential of the battery industry not only for the Quebec and Canadian supply chain, but also for the future of our communities. We're talking here not only about battery manufacture, but also about potential reuse and recycling. A battery used to power a car for 700, 800, 900 kilometres, when it reaches the end of its useful life for the car, remains adequate for other uses, including energy storage for homes, to give just one example.

I see the potential of these plants for a new impetus in the automotive industry, which, because of past investments, is now mainly located in Ontario, and not elsewhere in Canada. I also see the potential of these companies to support the energy transition in Quebec and Canada. I see all that potential.

The investments are gigantic. The potential is there. At the end of the day, will this potential be realized economically? It will be important to make sure.

I'm not in favour of the amendment for a number of reasons. First, it implies that no matter what we read or hear, we won't be able to reassure our fellow citizens or inform them if there's anything wrong. We won't be able to tell them that it's a good contract and that their money is well invested. We won't be able to explain it and prove it. We won't be able to reassure them. Nor will we be able to tell them that there's a problem with this deal and that we're going to try to fix it. We won't be able to say it either, because everything will be done behind closed doors. We'll all be sworn to secrecy. That's problematic.

If we are bound to secrecy when our fellow citizens want to be informed and reassured, how will we reassure them and how will we earn their trust?

This bothers me. We're accountable to our fellow citizens. Yes, I want to be informed, but so do my fellow citizens, and I work for them.

We're in the fifth hour devoted to this topic at the committee, and, all along, we've been talking about the fear of no longer being competitive if certain commercial details were ever revealed.

However, any contract signed with any government has protection provisions and trade secrets, industrial secrets. The four companies we're talking about now, while they've already signed contracts with governments, know particularly well that, around the world, governments are tending more and more towards transparency and accountability to citizens. If these companies don't have provisions to protect trade and industrial secrets, I wonder who their negotiators are and why they hired them.

• (1715)

I repeat, the problem is not with the companies themselves. It's the need for transparency and information. It's not a question of wanting to encourage one industry over another, or wanting to harm one industry more than another. It's a question of transparency, accountability and duty to my fellow citizens. It's also about ensuring that in the future, everyone's needs and demands are met.

When I'm told it will take 1,600 people to come and install machinery, it gives me pause. I thought Canada had excellent colleges and universities that trained people in industrial mechanics, building mechanics, electrical engineering and computer engineering. I thought these people were able to read blueprints, that they were able to apply a supervisor's advice when needed. It's normal—and I think I said this in the third and fourth hours of discussion—for companies that come to set up in another country to send a few employees to supervise the installation. I said “a few employees,” not 1,600 employees.

Is this figure accurate or not? We don't know. Perhaps we would know if we read the contracts behind closed doors. However, if we read the contracts behind closed doors, we will never be able to assure our fellow citizens whether or not there will be 1,600 temporary employees to ensure the machinery is in place. Our technicians and engineers would probably be able to do this installation, but, due to various choices, we don't know.

We will also never be able to assure them that, if 1,600 employees are really needed, they will be adequately treated with a respectable salary. I'm not talking about a wage that's good for South Korea, but a wage that meets Canadian standards.

A Canadian salary represents a fortune in South Korea. Are we going to pay them the salary they would earn there? Are we instead going to pay them the salary that a Canadian person with the same training would receive to provide the same service?

We need to reassure people about this too. No one wants to see Canada become the platform for cheap labour or “slavery 2.0.” No one wants to see that.

These are all questions we won't be able to answer openly to reassure or inform our fellow citizens if we study the contracts behind closed doors. Sincerely, in my eyes, therein lies the problem of a study behind closed doors.

For all these reasons, in particular, I will not be able to vote in favour of the Liberal amendment.

• (1720)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Vignola.

We will go to Mr. Bains, please. Go ahead.

I would just ask everyone to try and stay on the amendment at hand.

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

Before I get to the amendment, I am a little bit disappointed about how we've sort of landed in here today. I was scheduled to be at an ethics committee meeting for a very important topic to me.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Was it the “arrive scam”?

Mr. Parm Bains: Actually, it was the social media study that we're doing to protect Canadians and future generations against misinformation and disinformation domestically—

The Chair: I'm going to ask you to stay on the—

Mr. Parm Bains: Yes, there is relevance. I'll get to it, but I'm just curious about how some of these proceedings take place. You know, we had a vice-chair who was able to sit in, but for some reason we're here, and we're ultimately just playing some games that I think everyone is witness to right now.

An hon. member: Let's just vote and then we can go ahead with this.

The Chair: Mr. Bains has the floor.

Mr. Bains, continue.

Mr. Parm Bains: I would prefer if the clerk could maybe clear that up. We've listened to your explanation, Mr. Genuis. I'm not sure it was correct.

We're talking about batteries. They are the future of our automotive economy.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order on relevance.

This is about the amendment, not EVs.

Mr. Parm Bains: This is about EVs.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

Continue, Mr. Bains.

Again, I would ask that everyone stay closer.

Mr. Parm Bains: I'm getting to that. It's the automotive economy. We're talking about EVs. We're talking about deals we're making that are important to Canada, the future of our economy and Canadian jobs.

It is important to British Columbia. We made a similar type of deal, where the Premier of British Columbia, David Eby, the Prime Minister and the mayor of Maple Ridge, alongside—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The B.C. deal is not an automotive deal. It's a lithium battery deal. I would ask that he stick to the amendment, which is about whether or not the contracts are kept secret or made public.

The Chair: Thanks.

The floor is yours, Mr. Bains.

Mr. Parm Bains: It is about a contract. That's what I'm talking about. I'm talking about similar deals and why we're getting into a situation where.... We all know that when it comes to large investments and when developments are included in these investments, there's knowledge sharing that takes place. We have people who need....

In this instance, with what we're talking about in our amendment, it's three billion dollars' worth of equipment that needs to be assembled, and different people need to come and put them together at different times.

We have the new billion-dollar facility in Maple Ridge. It's another leading battery e-company, E-One Moli, creating 350 new jobs and securing over 100 existing positions. I hear every day about the labour gaps. We need people. We need all sorts of people who have the abilities to put together the skills required to do these jobs.

For those who are not aware, it's a subsidiary of the E-One Moli Energy corporation, which is a global manufacturer that specializes in high-performance, superior quality, rechargeable, lithium-ion cell products. We need the special skills to put those products into the workplace.

Out of all the potential places for it to invest, it chose Canada. This is what we're talking about here, once again. There's a contract involved. We have the auto experience. We have the greening electric grid and emerging rare-earth mineral mining operations. It's our government that has not only marketed this, making sure that the opportunities are here for the future generations to come here and invest....

We all know, with British Columbia, we're two days closer to the Asia-Pacific. It's over 30% of Canada's economy, and it's integral to our economy in British Columbia and for Canadians to ensure that we can continue to attract investments here.

People want a stable partner. They don't want to see situations like this—what we see in our committees. They want integrity in their partners to ensure the protection of any specific information that can possibly put in jeopardy the specifics of contracts that could, like my colleague said, jeopardize future investments.

We need to ensure that when it comes to innovation, science and IP protection, all of these things need to be protected. Ensure that certain members who....

We look at our own technologies. We don't want technology that's developed here to get into the wrong hands. You need specifically skilled people who want to protect those intellectual properties to come and do the job they need to do. Ultimately, the assembly of this plant that we're talking about needs to get going to ensure that Canadian jobs and generational jobs that are important to this region in question are protected.

With that, I encourage everyone to take a look at the amendments that have been presented and make sure.... I hope we can all support them.

• (1725)

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Bains, thanks very much.

Mr. Jowhari, go ahead, please.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In support of our amendment and to address some concerns that some of my colleagues across the table have raised, I want to specifically talk about five points.

First, I want to let everyone know, let Canadians know, that we, the Liberals, are willing partners in clarifying the statement made about a lot of foreign workers coming to take over Canadian jobs.

Second, I'm going to talk about the transparency that's being discussed as a result of suggesting it could be a two-step process. Step one is that we look at an internal review of unredacted documents to put members' minds at ease that there is no collusion going on. Then, while protecting many things, including investors' IPs, the government is willing to publish a redacted document.

Third, I'm going to talk about integrity. It's integrity that we need to make sure we follow and that we trust our departments are able to uphold through the procurement process. There is the potential of unintended consequences when we constantly try to open up contracts.

Fourth, I'm going to talk about accountability. That's probably where I'm going to spend a lot of time covering how we're accountable, first, to Canadians, and second, to the workers, to our partner provinces and to our investors, while holding up our end on a lot of international trade deals that we've had around free trade.

Fifth, I'll be closing with restating the facts. The fact is that there was a hiring plan submitted to the government as part of the negotiations for the incentives that the company would be receiving. The hiring plan will clarify everything. It is available regardless of whether it is redacted or unredacted, which I think is at the core of it.

These are the issues I will cover: willing partner, transparency, integrity, accountability and stating the facts.

Let me start with being a willing partner. We, as much as every member of this committee, are committed to making sure that we clarify this. Why are we interested in that? This is a success story. This, at least in the case of Windsor, would create 2,500 Canadian-owned and -operated jobs. It would create hundreds of jobs during the construction and hundreds of jobs during the implementation. We would train our Canadian workers on the technology through the knowledge transfer by the owners of the technology. We would learn, and we would make sure there would be a lot of downstream applications.

We're not trying to hide anything. We're actually jumping on the opportunity to highlight all of these. A lot of that is done, but this is a great opportunity for us to actually use the hiring plan submitted to the Government of Canada during the process of incentive negotiations and to highlight that. It will talk about the full-time jobs. It will talk about some of the so-called foreign labour, who are actually experts who would come here on a part-time basis. They would cross the border to the U.S. to do exactly the same thing in the U.S. That's how our Canadian workers would be trained.

We're going to show and to highlight how Canadian summer jobs would be created as a result of that. We're going to show how many individuals would be able to have an opportunity to work in a sector that's growing not only in Canada, but also across the world, and they would be a part of a success story. It would put Canada as number one.

• (1730)

We are a willing partner. We are a willing partner, however, only under certain conditions. Those conditions are when we are focused on integrity and accountability. There have been a lot of conversations around the fact that we are trying to hide things from the public, and therefore we are not being transparent. However, if we are representatives of the Canadian people in the House and on this committee, the opportunity is presented to us to conduct an internal review of unredacted documents. If the people of Canada have trusted us to be in this room—they have voted for us—I am sure they can trust our judgment while we have access to unredacted documents that will bring comfort to all the members in this House and on this committee, in terms of there being nothing to hide, aside from protecting everything—the Government of Canada, the investors and Canadian jobs.

As a next step, we're suggesting that we publish the redacted document on our site. Once again, I am trying to reassure everyone, to the best of my understanding, about what is happening. The hiring plan submitted to the Government of Canada during the process of incentive negotiation will be made public, whether it is redacted or unredacted. That will help demystify things and reassure everyone. Our commitment is to full transparency. We will bring the contract to the committee members. We're saying, "Hey, look, why don't we work together?" There is a study in INDU, the industry committee. Why don't they join us? We could join them to look at these documents. Then we'll publish the redacted document. If you're not comfortable, we can come back and have another motion. I think we're being completely transparent.

Now, let's talk about integrity, which is point number three. If we do this, we are challenging.... We are saying that our public ser-

vants don't know what they're doing. We're setting a very dangerous precedent. Every time something's getting negotiated, they're going to say, "We don't like it. We heard through the media or a social media post that this is wrong, so let's open up the process." Who's going to come back and invest in Canada if that's what the process is going to be? It's going to be supported by a majority of the 338 members of this House. Nobody will come and invest here because, if they're trying to protect their IP in the contract, it's not going to be wise for them. That's risk. Integrity also means mitigating risk.

Accountability is the fourth point. This is where I want to talk about how we're being accountable, first and foremost, to Canadians. We are accountable to Canadians because we have to make sure they understand the facts. I'll be closing on that, again. Let me reiterate. The facts are these: There was a hiring plan submitted to the Government of Canada during the process of incentive negotiation. It will be made public. That's accountability. That's fact.

We are told taxpayers are now funding this thing and that every Canadian is accountable for one thousand dollars' worth of tax. These are incentives being provided to the organization based on performance, after the operationalization of the fact. This means 2,500 jobs are created. It means 2,500 people are working with a good salary in a leading industry. What else does it mean? It means there are downstream jobs. It means there's knowledge. It means we've secured the growth of a region that, before the initiative this government brought, had an unemployment rate of 11.2%.

• (1735)

We are accountable. Not only are we accountable to tell Canadians the facts, but we are also accountable to tell our taxpayers that their money is being wisely invested.

We are also accountable to our government. We are accountable to the investors who are planning to invest in Canada because Canada has once again shown leadership on clean electricity, on an extended supply chain within the EV battery plant creation, on our critical minerals strategy, etc. Investors more than ever are choosing to come to Canada. We are accountable to them.

We're accountable to Canadians. Why? We are committed as a government to putting Canada first on the map. This is another strategy. This is another investment that is putting Canada on the map. Look at the number of investments that are coming from different countries. Why? They know that we are a willing partner and a trusted partner. We have a stable economy. We have the talent. That's why they're at the table.

There's another point on accountability. We are accountable to workers. We are accountable to show them and to demonstrate to them that we are protecting their jobs, that we are creating jobs for them. We are also making sure that the downstream economies also benefit.

How are we going to show the workers? We are going to show the workers by once again sharing with them hiring plans submitted to the Government of Canada during the process of incentive negotiation.

Now, we are also accountable to the provinces. Why are we also accountable to the provinces? They have come to the table, especially Ontario. We all know how hard it is to get the Province of Ontario to come to the table on anything. They've come to the table as an equal partner. They are putting their money in. They're putting partisanship and party affiliation aside. Why? This is the first time that provinces and the government are now putting the betterment of Canada in place as their priority.

We are also accountable to the investors. We need to assure our investors, number one, that we are a sound investment. We are a jurisdiction where they can come, and they can partner with us to grow. Their money is safe. Their money is going to give them a rate of return. That comes from the top. It comes from the vision, the vision that our leadership has shown at the highest level by putting clean electricity and reduction of greenhouse gas as its primary goal. Investors are interested in investing in jurisdictions and initiatives that are putting greenhouse gas emissions reductions as a priority mandate.

They also want to be sure of their intellectual property. They also want to make sure that the terms and conditions of their contract are protected. Why? They are also competing in other regions. They are competing down south. They are competing in Europe. They are competing in Asia. That's really important. That's why we are accountable to those investors. We are also accountable to each other.

We are also accountable to other governments. We have signed so many free trade agreements. Now we have access to a market in Europe of over \$2.5 billion. We have access to \$1.5 billion in Asia-Pacific. We have access to another billion dollars in Asia. Those guys are relying on the terms of their agreement. It is under the terms of agreement of a free trade that we are now allowing special skills to be imported under the free trade agreement to be able to help us operationalize a plant.

● (1740)

These guys are experts. They come here and help us implement. They help us train individuals. The people who are going to do the maintenance on this equipment are not foreign specialists. I can assure you, they're going to make a lot more money rolling out this equipment all over the world rather than coming in and working as a maintenance operator, not that there's absolutely anything wrong with the maintenance officer.

We are accountable to other governments under our free trade agreement.

I'll close with the facts. The facts are that as part of the incentive negotiation, the organization has submitted a hiring plan to the Government of Canada, and that's included in the contract. It is going to clearly demonstrate that Canadians will benefit from 2,500 full-time employees for a long time to come.

It also says that they are going to help us during the construction phase. Why? There are special needs for that equipment. Therefore, it's not about bringing in a bricklayer and building a building, it's to make sure that the building we are building fits the need, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that.

I'll draw a very simple example. When you want to build a house that you want to make a home, and you want to use the latest technology, whether it's solar, whether it's geothermal, whether it's a heating pump, whether it's wind, whether it's a high-efficiency furnace, etc., you don't do it on your own. You hire an architect. The architect, on a part-time basis, comes and does the design. You validate it, and you move on. If you want your roof to have solar panels, if you want to benefit from the green energy incentives that we are rolling out, you don't do it yourself. You bring in an approved energy auditor to do that. When you want to put in a high-efficiency furnace, you go to an HVAC expert.

This is no different from making sure we have the right experts to come to Canada on a part-time basis, as part of our free trade agreement, based on a hiring plan submitted to ensure that we can have 2,500 jobs on a go-forward basis, and a lot more downstream jobs.

Therefore, I strongly suggest that the committee agree to the amendment, because the amendment shows that we are willing to work together for Canadians to make sure that the transparency, the integrity of the process, the accountability and the facts are clearly demonstrated.

Thank you.

● (1745)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Masse, please. The floor is yours.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Chair, thank you for allowing me to intervene.

Looking at this amendment, a number of things are troublesome for me. I think the first step in this is to recognize that the amendments would have a significant impact on public confidence again.

What I believe in, which is really important at this point in time, is ending the confusion, clearing up the context and making sure there is a clear understanding of what's at stake here and how the investment takes place.

Unfortunately, the amendment would create a process that would effectively remove me from even communicating with my constituents about this matter. It would actually bar me from even bringing forth, out of good conscience, information. Other people would be discussing this in my own community and I would have to lie to their faces. I would not be able to communicate this to even Unifor.

The amendment that is being suggested would effectively remove the member for Windsor West's opportunity to engage in this discussion in the future to any meaningful extent.

I appreciate the fact that when we came here and when I made my first adjustment to the amendment, we got rid of the political jargon that was at the beginning of the amendment.

Second, I supported the Liberals in getting rid of paragraphs (g) and (h) because it was a process we also weren't comfortable with.

Here we are with an amendment that, at this point in time, I cannot support because I believe it's actually going to cause more problems in the future, as opposed to improving the situation.

We have so many different numbers out there right now. The member for Windsor—Tecumseh says that we don't. We've heard even today some different numbers that have come out.

When I asked my first question in the House of Commons, it was one job. Later on, it became 100 jobs and then 1,500 jobs. The job numbers are changing constantly. That's an issue in itself. Whether the contracts will give us that specific information, we'll find out.

One thing that is interesting is that when the companies sign these agreements with the government, they already have non-disclosure clauses on what they don't want to go public. That is already in the process when they sign these agreements. They understand they are going to be the recipient of public funds and public services. The things they do not want to be disclosed, we will not get anyway.

I look at what we went through with the Volkswagen situation. I refused to go to the actual hearing for the Volkswagen situation because I had to lock myself up in a room without any information that I could actually bring out of that room. Essentially, if I wanted to talk about Volkswagen in the future with any substance, I could have made a mistake and broken the law because I could have accidentally disclosed information. I couldn't even make notes.

In this motion, you can't even make reference notes for yourself. Ten years from now, I won't even be able to reference the situation with the confidence of knowing that what I actually got was right there.

On top of this, I have to tell you that Ottawa is one of the worst places to try to keep secrets. That's one thing I've learned here. What happens if we go into this lock-up process and into that situation where we can't make our notes and we can't actually say things outside? We can't converse with anybody else outside. What happens if something actually gets leaked or somebody claims that something has been leaked? We can't defend that.

I've worked in the auto sector. I've worked in plant 3 and plant 6 in Windsor. My father was a marketing and incentives manager for Chrysler. I believe in these jobs; I have for a long time. I believe with confidence that we actually have to transition something. It's not our fault that the United States moved with the Inflation Reduction Act. Both the Democrats and the Republicans decided to aggressively go after manufacturing jobs.

What we hear from the government all the time is that we are following through and replicating the Inflation Reduction Act process. At the same time, the Inflation Reduction Act actually has a formula and a process that's very much accountable in public. Meanwhile, we don't have that over here.

We have a number of jobs in different occupations that are at risk here, in terms of what some people are saying, whether it be.... The building trades have expressed this on several occasions. We do have some people who will come in and do some training on site. We don't know how many, so we can't even do proper social planning.

• (1750)

By the way, the South Korean ambassador does not come to Windsor for vacationing, so don't blame the Windsor police for this. The South Korean ambassador was in Windsor for a reason. A large constituency that he represents is going to be showing up in my community and is going to need the proper supports to be effective. We want them, whatever the number is, and the number, again, has been a moving target.

We don't want conflict, whether they're from South Korea, Germany, or any other place. What we want, if they are going to be coming here, is that the proper supports are in place. I've seen when the proper supports weren't in place. We had students coming through our constituencies from overseas who didn't have even proper housing. To me, this is also about the proper social planning that has to take place.

I can't say enough without.... The aspect that should not be lost on this is how we've lost 18 months in the process to train workers, which we have done traditionally in the auto sector on a regular basis. We've been assembling vehicles for over a hundred years and have built in the supports and capacities. What I'd like to find out from this process right now is whether or not—whether they're from Windsor or from all the other places coming forth—we can actually use this situation to train more workers so that we need fewer people from overseas for this particular situation.

This, again, is unique, because the Inflation Reduction Act is a large spigot of funds in the United States that we're responding to from here on this side.

I don't like the fact that we've been here. I've been trying to remove some of the language that I don't think is helpful in this, and I don't think that the motion we're discussing right now is going to make the situation better in the future. I think it's going to drag it out, and we're going to continue to have these types of problems.

I want to conclude by saying again that clearing the air, clearing the context and getting some consistency on this will be helpful. The companies, when they sign these agreements with the government, have their own non-disclosure information that is already baked in, and it's up for them to decide—and they have decided. It's almost condescending for us to say what can or cannot be in there because they've signed those agreements with their lawyers' advice. Knowing that they're doing this—because we're not the only country they're signing agreements with—they've already baked into those contracts the information they feel is sensitive.

For me, using this opportunity to somehow build better public confidence and an opportunity to get moving on training workers, whether it's in building skilled trades, the assembly or the training that comes afterwards; whatever it might be, is how we can make the situation better.

Unfortunately, I find the motion is going to make it worse and will drag this out even further. Again, if this ever got leaked, or some information got leaked or it was said it was from there, everybody who walked into that room would know the truth in their heart about what that was, but without breaking the law could not say that back out in public. You'd have to wear that the entire time, and I can't wear that walking around in my community.

• (1755)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Masse.

We'll go to Ms. Atwin, please.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's good to see everyone there. I'm happy to be back with the mighty OGGO.

I've been brought up to speed by my colleagues. I've certainly been following along as I've been on the indigenous and northern affairs committee for the last couple of weeks.

I want to weigh in, for sure, on what's being discussed today. I certainly appreciate the conversation around transparency and accountability. I can also appreciate the interpretation around risk, particularly to future foreign investment and the potential for destabilizing this kind of environment.

On the amendment, after reviewing it I really think it's a good-faith proposition that can satisfy our opposition colleagues, while protecting our partners. I think that's really paramount in the high-stakes scenario that we're looking at with this. The amendment allows, of course, the unredacted documents to be shared with our committee rather than in the public eye, which I don't think is the appropriate place for this to be discussed.

I look to the fact that we have a Privacy Act for a reason, and it's certainly not to protect nefarious deals, which is apparently the insinuation of our Conservative colleagues.

How we got here is particularly worrisome. A lot has been said in the House and on social media, unfortunately. I believe it's a controversy that's been fabricated. It's caused a lot of confusion for Canadians and perhaps for those hoping to invest in Canada, or to be part of future deals of this nature, which are groundbreaking in Canada. We should be celebrating this deal and this signal that it sends to Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and certainly around the globe, about the direction of the future economy and Canada's place in it.

Instead, I'll quote Ms. Payne again, who referred to this as “the firestorm”, as we're also seeing accusations of hiding documents and burying the issue, which I certainly reject wholeheartedly.

This discussion also threatens to overshadow some of the critical voices from stakeholders, including Dave Cassidy at Unifor, who represents the actual workers who will be directly benefiting from these well-paying and meaningful jobs.

I have a couple of things I'd like to read into the record regarding that specifically. I certainly support what our science and innovation minister has noted, that this is a “once in a lifetime” chance for Canada to carve its place out in the EV industry. He specifically references as well the Inflation Reduction Act. We want to keep our fair share of the auto sector in North America, so it's important for us to participate, catch up and get up to speed.

Brian Kingston is the president of the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association. He states, “It's really important that Canada secures some of these battery plants because this is going to effectively be the backbone of this new electric vehicle supply chain.”

He goes on to say, “I really can't understate how important it is to have a battery plant of this size and scale in Canada.”

Mark Stewart is the chief operating officer of Stellantis. He said that the United States Inflation Reduction Act added incentives for companies to locate EV plants south of the border. He said that it “changed the landscape for battery production in North America, making it challenging to produce competitively priced, state-of-the-art batteries in Canada without an equivalent level of support from government.”

I see there was also a mention around corporate subsidies, and I can certainly appreciate that discussion. I think there is a place to have that conversation, but context is everything, of course, and certainly this case is no exception. The Inflation Reduction Act absolutely changed the game.

I really would like to thank our opposition colleagues for being in committee today and using, I would argue, a bit more judicious and thoughtful word choice, because what I've seen in the House, particularly in question period, and on social media is really worrisome. This issue, specifically with respect to the use of the term “replacement workers”, is sharing this idea that Canadian union jobs will be stolen or taken by foreign workers, specifically from South Korea. I think we can all agree that we need to be really careful with how this discussion is framed, and what some of those impacts could be in broader society. This language, to me, has a dangerous tone and a potential harm. We need to be clear about what we're really talking about, and what the next steps are.

This is about NextStar's plan to hire technicians, including temporary staff, to install and test equipment, to transfer some of that skill and knowledge that we require to be part of this new and exciting green economy. It is absolutely the future, and I'm really proud to see that our government is stepping up on it.

It also, again, paves the way for these 2,300-plus Canadian unionized jobs. Again, context is everything here. I think it's really important that we stay clear to the facts.

Mr. Chair, there's no smoking gun here. I don't think we should pretend that there is. I support the amendment.

Thank you.

• (1800)

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm not seeing Mr. Kusmierczyk. We'll go to Mr. Sousa, and then we'll come back.

Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the comments being made by all members here. I appreciate the desire and the responsibility of us as representatives to act in the best interests of our constituents and Canadians. I respect that, and I appreciate that it is exactly the intent here of members of the Conservative party particularly, and all sides, frankly. We have that duty. That's why I implore everyone to be cautious about divulging information wildly because of the competitive implications that may arise.

I want to reinforce some of the comments made today. David Cassidy, the chair of Unifor national skilled trades council and the president of Unifor Local 444 reinforced that this is the single most important investment in history in their community in Windsor.

He says:

....my message is pretty simple. This has turned into nothing but political hay, and the facts in the matter are, if we're not part of these investments on a global scale, then we're out of the game. Windsor used to be the automotive capital of Canada, and then we had some downturns in the economy, and everything seemed to stop.... We bargained for these new investments and we continue to see that the battery electric vehicle production facility has the means by which to move forward.

He further states:

Windsor is now the gateway to manufacturing in Canada. That's where manufacturing starts, and we have skilled trades. They're on the job, and let me remind people, these South Koreans, that deal was done back by the Conservatives when they allowed the free trade agreement with South Korea. They're the ones who start this. It's nothing abnormal.

He goes on to say:

I'm an electrician by trade. It's nothing abnormal when we build machinery here that we follow it, whether it's to Asia, whether it's to the United States, whether it's to Mexico, to make sure it's up and running.

Mr. Cassidy continues, and this was today:

There is proprietary stuff with this equipment that we've got to make sure is right and we get it right.

He adds this about the Conservatives:

[They] don't talk about the 600 jobs that we have that's going to be in engineering alone, and when we have at the research and development that they're putting them jobs in there.

He says:

They don't talk about the 2,500 members from my local—going to be my local when it's up and rolling—that are going to build these millions of batteries. And this has turned into nothing but political hay, and it's driving me crazy because we have more investments coming to Windsor.

He notes:

We have another company that's going to invest \$3 billion with one company, and they have a decision if they're going to come to Windsor or they're going to go to Mexico. And when they see this going on here, it's ridiculous....if it was up to the Conservative government... We would not have this investment because they look at it as corporate welfare instead of a return on investment for all the workers that's going to be there.

He goes on to say:

I hope people listen to this. I hope people pay attention. You know, this is nothing new. I'm a skill trades. I talk to the skilled trades... The iron workers are installing lines in the modular plant overseen by the South Koreans, and that's starting right next week. So like I said, this is nothing new... I just hope that people really pay attention to this.

Mr. Cassidy continues:

It's not about taking jobs. This is about the equipment that they have built in South Korea at the battery plant. They're coming to help install this equipment, whether it's an electrician, whether it's a millwright. These are workers that are going to be there temporarily assisting. And they're not staying.

He goes on to say:

Today on the job site, there's about a thousand skilled trades putting the building together, and that's going to go to over 2,000 as we start installing the equipment into these facilities.

● (1805)

He reminds us that this facility is large:

I mean I think they quoted it's 20 Rogers Centres, the size of 20 Rogers Centres. Just imagine that! It's a huge facility.

He states further, "We've got to get this battery plant going" and "We have to make sure all the theatrics and all the political stuff is gone."

He adds, "Like they're asking for a national inquiry." He's talking about this as a national inquiry. "On what?" he asks. "What is a national inquiry on?" he is asking.

He then states:

We're going to spend taxpayer dollars for the politicians to debate and discuss about whether we should open the books and show exactly what we're doing. If we do not participate in the global market with tax dollars then we're out of the game. We're out of the game in manufacturing and that's the truth.

I respect what members are saying, especially Mr. Masse with regard to training workers and what is engaged in these investments that will help us train the workers, and what investments are being made to secure those permanent Canadian jobs.

You say I can't go in good conscience, look at the contracts, determine what is being done and not be able then to discuss them if the disclosure suggests that work for Canadian workers wasn't being made. The fact is measures that are based in the contract require permanent Canadian jobs in the deal.

Furthermore, can you wear, I think it was mentioned, the information without being able to divulge it? The question is, or I guess the other question is, can you wear not being able to tell Canadians that this investment is for the benefit of our economic renewal and economic benefit and economic reinvestment in Windsor, which has suffered somewhat during the downturn. This enables that recovery to happen in a big way.

The jeopardy here is not having the jobs in the first place, right? Mr. Cassidy has made a reference to it as well. They're not taking away jobs. They're investing to create more investment and more jobs.

I would like to yield a portion of my time to my colleague, who I think had a meeting today with Mr. Cassidy. Is that okay?

The Chair: There's no set time. You talk until you yield the floor; there is no sharing of time.

Mr. Charles Sousa: There is no sharing of time at this point?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: I realize you're new to politics, Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I try my best.

The Chair: Next on the speaking list is Mr. Kusmierczyk, and then we have Mr. Genius, Mr. Arnold and then Mr. Viersen and Mr. Perkins.

You're yielding the floor to Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this important issue.

This is a serious issue. This is such a serious issue for my community that, today, the president of Unifor Local 444 Dave Cassidy came to Ottawa to speak on it. He is the president of the local union that represents thousands of workers in my community—Stellantis workers at the Windsor assembly plant. When the battery plant is completed, he will represent 2,500 local, Canadian, full-time members, who will be building about two million batteries at that battery plant each and every year.

This is serious. Dave Cassidy and I had a chance to meet the Prime Minister today in his office. We sat down for an important conversation. This highlights how serious the situation is.

My colleague from Windsor talked about public confidence. What I have seen is a concerted effort, from the very beginning, to undermine public confidence not only in the battery plant in Windsor but also in the entire investment program this federal government has brought forward—\$30 billion plus in investment in communities like Windsor. These are communities in Quebec and British Columbia. These are communities like St. Thomas. These are all communities that, historically and most recently, have been hit very hard economically and have experienced a lot of hard times. There is a lot on the line here. I said it in my original appearance. This is so important and serious that we need to speak in facts. We need to be honest and speak truthfully about this investment, because it means a great deal to communities like ours.

In that meeting with the Prime Minister and President Dave Cassidy.... By the way, I should say that he's also the Unifor chair of the National Skilled Trades Council. We had an opportunity, a couple of weeks ago, to meet members of the Unifor National Skilled Trades Council from across the country. It had a meeting in Windsor.

The meeting with the Prime Minister and Unifor Local 444 President Dave Cassidy was important. It reaffirmed the strong partnership our federal government has with labour and workers. That partnership delivered the Stellantis-LG battery plant in the first place. When we had the second round of very difficult negotiations, that partnership also saw us through. It's built on trust. That partnership between our federal government and Unifor is what delivered not only the battery plant but also 2,500 good-paying, permanent jobs for local Canadian workers in our community.

The workers who will be building those batteries will be Canadian. They will be local. They will be unionized, which is what Dave shared with us. Those are amazing jobs. They won't be here for five or 10 years. They will be here for generations. They will be the en-

gine that drives my community. It positions my community. It positions Windsor as a thriving manufacturing community. It positions us at the forefront of the transition to zero-emission vehicles. Our community will lead that transition to zero-emission vehicles. It's incredible when you think about it.

• (1810)

On top of the 2,500 jobs from building batteries—and again, these will be local, Canadian unionized workers with good-paying jobs in our community—there will be, 2,300 construction jobs to be carried out by Canadian local workers in the trades, whether it's LI-UNA, iron workers, millwrights, carpenters, sheet metal and roofers, IBEW—you name it—and they're all there already. There are literally 900 workers, as we speak, building the battery plant right now. They're all Canadian. They're all local. When all is said and done, there will be 2,300 Canadian local workers building the plant.

I encourage all of my colleagues to take a drive to the battery plant site at the corner of E.C. Row and Banwell. They will see that the job site is like a beehive. There are literally hundreds—900—workers building the battery plant as we speak.

In that meeting with the Prime Minister and Dave Cassidy, we talked about the fact that the major reason the battery plant is here in the first place is that we have the best workforce in the world here in Canada and in Windsor. That's why they selected Windsor as the location, because they know we have the absolute best workforce in the world. We know how to build things.

Dave Cassidy always says that if you want it built right, build it in Windsor-Essex—and it's true. That's exactly what our Korean partners decided when they selected Windsor as the site to build their \$5 billion battery plant. They invested \$5 billion in our community. It's never been done before. My community has never seen an investment that large.

In speaking with the Prime Minister and Dave Cassidy, we recognized that, in addition to having the best skilled workforce in the world, we have the best trades in the world. We have folks whose talents and skills are the best in the world and world-class trades in our community. We said that we want to work together to maximize Canadian workers, not just by constructing the battery plant and building the batteries but by installing the machinery and the equipment that will go into the battery plant.

There are 300 machines that will be installed in that battery plant and 9,000 shipping containers' worth of machinery and equipment—9,000. This is unprecedented in Canada. This is the first battery plant in Canada and the scale of it is unprecedented, and so we will require a partnership to get this battery plant off the ground and to get it up and running. We will require a partnership with partners that have 30 years' experience building batteries. The Korean company LG has 30 years' experience building batteries. They literally have 24,000 patents just on battery manufacturing alone—24,000. They know how to build batteries, and so we're partnering with them.

The world literally wants to partner with Canada to build batteries and electric vehicles, and that's a good thing. The world wants to not only partner with Canada to build batteries but they want to build batteries here in Canada. They want to transfer their knowledge to Canadians. They want to get us up to speed and they want us to be the best battery manufacturers in the world—and we will be because we have a track record of it.

● (1815)

I had a chance to meet the CEO of NextStar on Friday. I flew home specifically because I wanted to meet the CEO of NextStar, Mr. Danies Lee. We had about a two-hour conversation. Afterwards, I was given a chance to tour the job site, and it's incredible. It is absolutely incredible. It is beyond anything anyone has ever seen before.

He laid the plan out for me. It is a plan that is going to benefit our community. The economic impact for Windsor is something we have never, ever seen before in our community—ever.

It's not just the 2,500 full-time, well-paying union jobs that will be created in my community. That's never been done before in a single investment like this. We're going to have thousands more construction workers, and hundreds more folks installing machinery and equipment on a temporary basis, but it's more than that. It's all of the spinoff jobs.

Everybody in the business knows that for every automotive job, there are six or seven spinoff jobs. Can you imagine six or seven spinoff jobs for the 2,500 we just mentioned? These will be good-paying jobs. These are jobs that we can build futures around. These are jobs that you can raise families on—here, in Windsor and Essex. The spillover to restaurants, retailers and businesses in our community is going to lift our entire community. This is why this is so serious.

I've spoken with the trades. I've spoken with IBEW. I've spoken with ironworkers. I've spoken with millwrights and sheet metal roofers. I've spoken with them. I know their concerns. I know they want to maximize work for their members, and I do too, because they are the best workers in the world, and they are incredibly proud of what they do. They are so proud of what they do because they're so good, and I understand it.

I met with Mr. Danies Lee, the CEO of NextStar and I had a long conversation with him. In my message to him, I delivered a number of key messages that I heard from the ironworkers, the millwrights and the trades. I told him that we want to see Canadian workers maximized at every opportunity for the installation of machinery

and equipment. I told him to lean on us. We have the talent and we have the skills. Maximize as much as possible. I told him, as well, that this is a huge opportunity for a real partnership.

We also spoke about the fact that there is a need for greater communication between NextStar and the trades. I encouraged Mr. Lee to meet with the trades in Windsor, sit down, share the plan that he shared with me, have that conversation, reassure our local workforce and come up with a plan that maximizes local input. Absolutely.

I also said to Mr. Lee that our skilled workers in Windsor—our trades—are incredibly proud of what they do. They're incredibly proud workers. They're incredibly skilled and incredibly proud. This is the largest investment in the history of our community, and they want to be a part of it because they're proud. They want to be a part of it.

Again, I encouraged Mr. Lee at NextStar to meet with the local trades and maximize Canadian workers as much as possible.

After the meeting with the Prime Minister, Dave held a national press conference. It was quite a day for our Unifor Local 444 president. He comes to Ottawa, comes to Parliament Hill, meets with the Prime Minister and then holds a national press conference.

He wanted to deliver a message to all of us around this table. He wanted to deliver a message to all members of Parliament, and he wanted to deliver a message specifically, I believe, to the Conservatives and to Mr. Pierre Poilievre.

● (1820)

Let me read you that message. Dave Cassidy says:

Well, my message is pretty simple. This has turned into nothing but political hay and the facts in the matter are if we're not part of these investments on a global scale then we're out of the game.

He continues:

Windsor used to be the automotive capital of Canada and then we had some downturns in the economy and everything seemed to stop in London. But I can tell you we bargained these new investments we continue to see as the battery electric vehicle goes and moves forward.

Windsor is now the gateway to manufacturing in Canada. That's where manufacturing starts.

Then he goes on to say that a lot is being said:

They don't talk about the 600 jobs that we have that's going to be in engineering alone and when we have at the research and development that they're putting them jobs in there.

We're building in addition to a battery plant, then. A lot of folks may not be familiar with the fact or understand that, in addition to the battery plant jobs, we're actually building—and right now, as we speak, it's rising from the ground—a research and development centre, with 600 engineering jobs in our community. He goes on:

They don't talk about the 2,500 members from my local—going to be my local when it's up and rolling that are going to build these millions of batteries.

It's going to be Dave's members. It's going to be Unifor 444 members, with 2,500 who are going to be building batteries. Then he says:

And this has turned into nothing but political hay and it's driving me crazy because we have more investments coming to Windsor.

This is important. He continues:

We have another company that's going to invest \$3 billion with one company and they have a decision if they're going to come to Windsor or they're going to go to Mexico.

• (1825)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'm going to interrupt. There's a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, this is not relevant to the motion on the table at all.

The Chair: Thank you.

We do obviously allow a very wide latitude on this, but we probably should get back to the motion. We haven't been on Mr. Sousa's motion for quite a while. We should get back to the motion—or the amendment, rather. I'm sorry.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: We'll do that, but this is important, Mr. Chair, because this is relevant to my community. I do appreciate the latitude. This isn't a game, Mr.—

The Chair: I will ask that you do swing back relatively soon to the amendment.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: This is important, Mr. Chair.

This isn't funny, Mr. Genuis, to my community. This is serious.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You're funny, because you're trying to defy the chair's rule.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: No, this is serious, Mr. Genuis.

The Chair: I'm going to interrupt.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Follow the chair's rules.

The Chair: Mr. Kusmierczyk has the floor, but please bring it back relatively soon to the amendment.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: This is exactly one of the key points we're making about this amendment, so this is important. This is absolutely pertinent, because we're talking about balancing transparency and the need to protect not just current investments but future investments. Dave speaks to this, and he says:

We have another company that's going to invest \$3 billion with one company and they have a decision if they're going to come to Windsor or they're going to go to Mexico. And when they see this going on it's ridiculous.

That's what he says: "it's ridiculous."

Mr. Chair, this amendment that we have before us is a balance between transparency and accountability and the responsibility I have to my community, a responsibility to make sure I don't put in jeopardy the historic investment in Windsor, the battery plant, but also that it doesn't jeopardize the billions of dollars of investment that are on our doorstep. They're on our doorstep. There are Korean and Japanese companies and other companies from Germany and elsewhere that are looking to locate, which are in Windsor right now—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:—looking at land, looking at property, looking to locate—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: He has been asked a couple of times by the chair to stay relevant to the issue.

Can I remind the member what the issue—

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: This is about the issue.

Mr. Rick Perkins: The issue is whether or not the contracts are public or private. This is a dissertation on the general nature of the auto business in Windsor.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Kusmierczyk, you have the floor, but please—

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: No, I appreciate it, and I—

The Chair: I ask that you stick to the amendment, or at least come close to it.

Thanks.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: This is at the absolute heart of the debate.

Again, we need to balance transparency and accountability with responsibility to make sure that we are not putting at risk all the investments we have lined up in communities like mine, and in Quebec. The Northvolt investment is \$7 billion. There is a \$10-billion Volkswagen investment in St. Thomas. The truth of the matter and the point that I'm making is that these investors are here and making a decision. When they make a decision, the winning community.... The difference between whether they invest in Windsor, Mexico or Alabama.... The margins are razor-thin. There's no medal, reward or prize for second-best.

If you're telling these companies that their contract—the sensitive commercial information and competitive advantages contained in those documents—will be made public for their competitors, you might as well hand those battery plants and investments to Alabama, Georgia, Michigan, Ohio, Mexico, Italy or Poland. You might as well hand those investments over. The margins are razor-thin. We don't need to be giving these companies a reason to not invest in Canada. It seems to me that some members of this committee are hell-bent on giving these companies reasons not to invest in Canada.

There's a balance here. The amendment my colleague put forward is reasonable and pragmatic. It would allow every single member of this committee to take a look at the unredacted documents. It would allow them to take a look at them, study them and see. It would allow Canadians to look at redacted information to make sure the sensitive information is not.... That can put these companies at a disadvantage. It could turn these companies away from Canada and deliver these investments into the arms of Alabama, Michigan or Ohio.

If you don't believe this threat is real, look at all the companies and investments that have been made in the United States, in the Great Lakes states. LG has seven battery plants in the United States. Michigan, Ohio and Indiana are doing everything they possibly can to land these investments. It seems as if some members of this committee are doing everything possible to lose these investments.

The margins are so thin, yet Canada has been successful. I can name seven investments off the top of my head right now that we've made in the last two years—billion-dollar investments in Canada. International companies want to build here. We fought tooth and nail to land the Stellantis-LG battery plant. Our community fought tooth and nail to land that investment. We fought tooth and nail to secure the investment through some really tough renegotiations. Now we're fighting like hell to protect our battery plant against untruth and a campaign of disinformation to erode public support for this battery plant and investment. That's what we're up against.

It's also important for us to know the context. Dave Cassidy came here. First of all, he was an electrician. He started from the bottom at Stellantis. As president, he led that organization and those members through some incredibly difficult times. We all remember 2008-09.

• (1830)

Dave had to stand up in front of his members and in front of the media in those dark times and tell them that they were losing a second shift and a third shift. He had to tell them that jobs were going to be cut.

This is important for me to get on record because it highlights the importance of this conversation and why we need to be responsible with our actions. We need to find a responsible path forward that can balance those two things. It's important for me to get the context on record.

What is the context?

Windsor was ground zero for the de-industrialization of Canada. When the Conservatives were in office, 300,000 manufacturing jobs left Canada.

• (1835)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order on relevance again, Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Kusmierczyk, we've been very patient with the relevance issue. I realize we always allow a fair amount of latitude, but we could get closer to the amendment on the motion. We can always continue this with the motion itself. Perhaps on the amendment—

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Chair, not agreeing with the premise of what I'm saying is not grounds to limit my ability to address this committee.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

Mr. Chair, you have warned the member three times. I think you've been more than lenient. The usual practice I've seen in other committees is if the member refuses the chair, then you move on to the next speaker.

The Chair: I'm sure Mr. Kusmierczyk will circle back to the amendment.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: This is relevant.

Mr. Chair, I'll tell you why this is relevant.

The Chair: Mr. Kusmierczyk, you have the floor. Please continue, but if you could please....

Go ahead.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Let me explain to you why it's relevant.

If we continue on this path with this circus and with this misinformation campaign, and if we continue with the original motion here to make all of these contracts public, it will risk the investment. This will turn back the clock. My community does not want to go back to those dark times.

I think we need to understand and Canadians need to understand those dark times and why we're fighting so hard here.

Again, it was 300,000 manufacturing jobs gone when the Conservatives were in power.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The repetition rule appears here, too. If you're going to filibuster, you should learn how to do it. One of them is you don't continue to repeat yourself.

Thanks.

The Chair: We do reach a point on the repetition. We do reach a point where we do have to get back more closely to the amendment.

Go ahead.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: I talk again about the 300,000 jobs that left under the Conservatives. Windsor was ground zero. We had 11.2% unemployment—

Mr. Rick Perkins: On a point of order, this is repetition again.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Again, if my colleague would allow me to finish, we had 11.2% unemployment in Windsor. When the Conservatives were in government and the present Leader of the Opposition was the Minister of Employment, we had 11.2% unemployment in Windsor.

That's the context. This is why we are fighting so hard.

Mr. Rick Perkins: On a point of order, it's repetition. He said it about five times now.

If you're going to filibuster, you have to not repeat yourself. That's the rule.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Perkins does have a point on the repetition.

Continue, Mr. Kusmierczyk, without the repetition.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: I asked myself, "Why are the Conservatives so hell-bent on their campaign of misinformation?" I have some theories, which I'd like to share with the committee.

I'm going to read what Dave Cassidy said into the record. This is important. He said that the facts of the matter are these: "If it was up to the Conservatives, we would not have this investment in Windsor today." You know, Dave says it as straight as it is. He said that the Conservatives "look at it as corporate welfare instead of a return on an investment for all the workers that will be there." Again, Dave says it straight. If anyone knows Dave Cassidy, they will know that he doesn't beat around the bush. He just says it. He looks you in the eye and tells you the truth—flat out, as simple as that.

We know the Conservatives view this investment as corporate welfare. They are against our government partnering with labour in a historic fashion to deliver this battery plant for Windsor. It's historic—\$15 billion. It's partnering, by the way, not just with labour but also with industry and the provincial government. It's remarkable. That's how you get things done. It's when you partner. When you work together and partner, you get things done. That also means partnering with our Korean partners.

I also believe the Conservatives are against this investment because they don't believe in climate change. They don't believe in electric vehicles. They don't support our battery plant. They never once said they support the battery plant—not once in two years have they said it. They've had plenty of opportunity. They've had plenty to say; they've just never said that. They've never supported our battery plant investment.

They also believe our electric vehicle battery plant is a direct threat to the entire existence of the present Conservative Party. They're against the belief we hold: that you need to have an environmental plan to have an economic plan. When you have an environmental plan, you have an economic plan and create jobs. That's what the battery plant in Windsor illustrates clearly to the rest of the world.

Finally, the battery plant in Windsor is a direct threat to the Conservatives because it undermines their entire narrative that Canada is broken. If Canada were broken, we wouldn't have a \$6-billion battery plant investment in Windsor, a \$10-billion battery plant investment in St. Thomas, a \$7-billion battery investment in Quebec, a \$1-billion battery investment in British Columbia, and so on and so forth. That is \$30 billion in investment in Canada in the auto sector. We've never seen such investment in the auto sector in three short years. It's incredible—Oshawa, Ingersoll, St. Thomas. It's up and down the 401. It's in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia.

We're building this industry from scratch. That's why we need partners. We talk about partnership a lot. That's why we need to partner with the experts. LG has been building batteries for 30 years. They're coming here to share their expertise and knowledge with us.

I was speaking with Mr. Danies Lee from NextStar. He said, "Irek, we have families. We left family in Korea. We left our communities. We left our homes, and—"

• (1840)

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Please go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I draw the chair's attention to page 1059 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which deals with both relevance and repetition.

The amendment to the motion before us deals with the simple subject of making contracts secret. The member is nowhere near that and has been warned a number of times by the chair to be relevant and stop repetition. After a number of those interventions by the chair, this guide we all use says the chair should shut the member down and move on to the next speaker.

The Chair: Thank you for your advice, Mr. Perkins.

I do have that issue up on my screen right now.

I'm sure Mr. Kusmierczyk, though, will get back to the amendment shortly. I notice he did mention "finally," in which case, I hope we are at that point. We do have other speakers on the list, including Mr. Sousa.

Go ahead, Mr. Kusmierczyk, but please avoid repetition, and get back the amendment.

• (1845)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was speaking about my meeting with the CEO of NextStar, Mr. Danies Lee, last Friday, and we talked about the fact that his team came to Canada openly wanting to partner and build this battery plant, lift our community up and provide jobs for thousands of Canadians. He said, "You know, we left our families behind; we left our homes behind." Their intent is to share their knowledge with Canadian workers, share their expertise with Canadian workers, with Windsor workers, and then go back home. It's to transfer that knowledge, to leave that knowledge in Windsor and to go back home. That's their ultimate goal, so that it is Windsor that runs the battery plant and Windsor workers who drive the battery plant. I think that's important, and what an incredible partnership that is.

Going back to the amendment, this is about balancing transparency and accountability, which is what this amendment is all about. It will allow all members of Parliament around this table to look at the agreement unredacted. It will allow Canadians to look at the redacted version and get the information that they need about jobs.

The information is there. We're proud that Canadians will be able to get that information. They will see, again, the tens of thousands of jobs that are being created in communities that have gone through some tough times, communities like mine. I think it strikes the right balance. I think it protects our competitiveness and future investment. I think this is reasonable. It's pragmatic.

I ask my colleagues around the table to support the amendment because I do believe that it is the path forward. We've worked so hard to attract these investments, and we want to protect those investments and do everything we possibly can, not just to attract and protect investments but to bring additional investments to communities like mine in Windsor.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'll just say I agree with everything MP Masse said.

The Chair: Mr. Viersen.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): I'm good.

The Chair: Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa: The heart of this debate is in some respects all about free trade, something I think my opponents across the way would appreciate, having been part of a number of negotiations around the North American Free Trade Agreement, and recognizing the importance of the auto sector's relevance to Canada.

Free trade is all about ensuring trust in the activities of the Canadian partnership, the Canadian government and the Canadian provincial areas as well, and in jurisdictions that are part of these negotiations. Free trade is something that I thought the opposition members were all in favour of in years past. It doesn't seem to be the case. Certainly, it wasn't the case when we talked about modernizing the free trade agreement with Ukraine, and ensuring that we continue to support—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Sousa. We have a point of order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: What is the relevance? This is about whether you get access, publicly or privately, to the contracts, and whether the Liberals are trying to hide it. We'll show Canadians...on transparency.

It is not about free trade or his assumptions about what may or may not be in the clauses of a contract he has not seen, or his minister has not read.

• (1850)

The Chair: That is a valid point. Perhaps we could get to your amendment at hand.

Before we continue, I am going to suspend for about two or three minutes to allow for our table assistants to attend to some issues. We'll be right back.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Can we request five minutes so we can actually make it to the washroom?

The Chair: Yes, we will grant five minutes, and not a second longer.

• (1850)

(Pause)

• (1959)

The Chair: We are back, colleagues.

Mr. Sousa, please go ahead.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On the motion itself, in regard to the amendment and the issue around trade, that's at the heart of the issue we're dealing with in the motion. The relevance here is the disclosure of confidential materi-

al that jeopardizes some of our free trade ability and the investment of some of these operations that are looking to come to Canada.

We don't want a repeat of what happened with Avro Arrow, for example, under that Conservative regime. It did away with an opportunity in aviation to grow a specific market, as is this with the EV strategy. This is a new opportunity to build an economic recovery. Thankfully, we're looking at an "EV arrow" as a result.

This is an opportunity to clean the environment, including getting out of coal. The member opposite is talking about gas plants. He is bringing forward another reason that EV is so important. We want to get rid of emitters. We want to ensure that we clean our climate. This is what this is about. We're trying to invest and we're trying to attract investment into Canada to provide for clean energy and a whole new green economy.

Now the Conservatives may not appreciate that. They may not want to diversify Canada's economy. They may want to get stuck 100 years back when we were reliant on fossil fuel. We have something better that we can do and we can be leaders in it.

This investment and the confidentiality issues as presented in this amendment protect those interests, which the members opposite will be putting in jeopardy, just as they put in jeopardy some of the other agreements that I have already made clear.

Going forward, it's all about prosperity. It's all about the green economy. It's all about attracting a clean economy. This investment does position Canada to be a global leader. To sustain this investment also helps us sustain a domestic battery manufacturing sector in Ontario.

The auto workers are at the heart of the economy. They're at the heart of Windsor. There are two members here in this committee who realize better than anybody how important the revival of the industry in Windsor is. The ripple effect is huge. The supply chain right across Canada is affected by these investments. That's being jeopardized by opening up the books without this amendment, as is being proposed. This amendment would enable us to protect that.

Furthermore, these 2,500 jobs are permanent. They're full time and they're in Canada.

To the motion, do we want these investments to keep coming to Canada? I believe all members here would say, "Of course". Why jeopardize that opportunity by putting forward some of what they're suggesting?

One thing that's critical in maintaining Canada's position as the third-best location for foreign direct investment in the OECD is something that speaks constantly to why they want to come to Canada as opposed to going to other jurisdictions. Why did Windsor, Canada win, as opposed to Mexico or some of the United States' jurisdictions? It's because they believe that in Canada they can trust and have certainty. The companies have certainty in our economy and in our workers. They can trust their skill sets, their duty of confidentiality and their duty of respecting business and the interests of the partnerships being put forward, which the members opposite would jeopardize by not supporting this amendment.

Companies' trust in Canada is absolutely vital. Commercial confidentiality is at the heart of this very amendment. We keep that trust by viewing these contracts responsibly. We're not suggesting that we don't look at them.

Some of the members opposite say that we're not giving them transparency, but we are. We're allowing all of us to review this, in effect.

The member laughs at the ability for us to review these contracts and to protect the interests of his constituency. We all have that duty. Certainly, parts of it will be sensitive and that's all the more reason to take precautions. That's why this amendment is stipulated as such.

● (1900)

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order while he looks at his notes.

The member is simply reading his opening speech again. That's repetition.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Mr. Chair, that's not true. He's just making that up again. That's not the case here at all.

The Chair: I don't believe he's making it up. You can just continue, but be aware of—

Mr. Charles Sousa: I will. In fact, I want to talk about—

The Chair: Allow me to finish.

Please be aware of the repetition issue, Mr. Sousa. Please go ahead.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm very sensitive to that as well.

I appreciate the member's concerns about it, because what is repetitive is the fact that they have continuously misinformed and suggested that there are excessive numbers of foreign workers coming to Canada on a permanent basis, suggesting that all of the taxpayers' money is being put up front, when in fact that's not the case. That's why I think it's important for us to take a look at what Stellantis, in regard to this amendment, is putting forward. It's a major milestone that will create thousands of Canadian jobs for a net-zero emissions economy in the future.

Here is what happened in Ottawa when we announced this. The future of Canada's transportation sector is green, and so to create middle-class jobs and position our economy for success in a low-carbon world, the government is bringing major international investments to Canada that will secure a strong electric vehicle battery supply chain. That is the crux of what we're doing here.

What's important isn't what we're saying. It's not just what we're putting forward. The Premier of Ontario and the mayor of Windsor, alongside the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, went on to do a joint venture that will see a total investment of over \$5 billion Canadian in a facility to manufacture batteries for EVs in Canada. This will position Canada as a global leader in the EV manufacturing supply chain. The battery facility will be located in Windsor, Ontario, and will supply Stellantis plants in Windsor and across North America. The facility will be operational by 2025. It's not just about what we're supplying in Windsor and in that trade corridor. It's all across Canada that will benefit.

The Government of Canada has been working closely with both of these companies to secure this investment, given that the project aligns with the government's commitment to develop a Canadian battery ecosystem that supports clean technology and industrial transformation. This announcement and what's built into this amendment within these contracts is yet another step forward. The project, as noted, should create around 2,500 well-paying permanent jobs. More importantly, this investment will not only position Canada as a global leader in the production of EV batteries, but it will also support the development of a sustainable domestic battery manufacturing sector in Canada.

It's interesting that we hear some of the concerns, and I appreciate that because we all want to know as much as we can about the impacts it will have on the Canadian economy and on Canada's investment through its position. In some respects, as noted in the past, it's like our putting up some equity in the deal. The primary equity, the initial tranche, as I mentioned, is coming from Stellantis.

This is what the Conservative Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade had to say on this very issue back in March. He said that, "Through...strategic investments across integrated supply chains, and by reducing the cost of doing business in Ontario by nearly \$7 billion annually", we're able to claim our leadership in the emerging North American EV battery industry. He noted that this partnership with the federal government, Stellantis and other players in Windsor enables us to be at the forefront of a new EV industry, not unlike what has been happening in former industry investments. The fact that we do not participate in amending this motion will give cause for concern to those partners.

The Conservative premier of the province—the cousins of the members opposite who are trying to jeopardize this very contract—said this:

Attracting this multi-billion dollar investment will secure Ontario's place as a North American hub for building the cars and batteries of the future. As we secure game-changing investments, we're also connecting resources, industries and workers in northern Ontario with the manufacturing might of southern Ontario to build up home-grown supply chains. Every region of Ontario will benefit with thousands of jobs being created and a—

● (1905)

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The Chair: We have a point of order, Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Rick Perkins: What is the relevance to the motion, which is about the secrecy of the contracts and not about a dissertation from somebody else about the battery industry? The motion is not about the validity of the battery industry; it's about the secrecy. If the member could stick to the secrecy amendment he put forward and why he thinks it should be secret and not public in spending that money, it would be appreciated.

● (1910)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

He does have a point there, Mr. Sousa, if you could please get back to your amendment.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Yes, I'd like to clarify.

I appreciate the member's concern, but the amendment is not about secrecy. The amendment is about disclosure. The amendment is about ensuring that the disclosure is made. It's not in secret. It's enabling members opposite to appreciate what is being put forward.

I can read the amendment to clarify, for your benefit, that this is not about secrecy.

The Chair: That would be repetition.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Then I will continue, Mr. Chair, about the issue as to why the Conservative premier of this province is very concerned about this investment and the notion of disclosing confidential material that puts at jeopardy the very issue.

The Premier of Ontario says that this places Ontario in the future. He says, "As we secure these game-changing investments, we're also connecting resources, industries and workers in northern Ontario." He also says that "Ontario will benefit with thousands of jobs being created, and a stronger economy that works for everyone [in every region]."

Stellantis is concerned about this very issue. You're putting them on notice. You're giving them the risk of disclosure that you'll benefit from seeing.

I remind everyone watching that the members in this committee will have the right to review the documents. They will have the right to see the material to protect the interests of the taxpayer and of Canadians. They'll have the opportunity to see exactly what's being put forward.

The mayor of Windsor states:

Stellantis is Windsor's largest employer [right now] and has a rich history in this community. Chrysler began operations in this community in 1928 and has employed generations of Windsor-Essex...at its facility. With this announcement, we are securing the future for thousands more local workers and securing Windsor's strategic location as the home of Canada's electric vehicle future—

Let's be mindful. This investment is the crux of enabling that EV future.

—As the world pivots to EVs, Windsor will soon be home to the battery manufacturing facility that powers it all.

We have partnerships with various stakeholders recognizing the importance of what is being done with this investment, and we want everyone to be aware of what that investment means to our GDP, to our positioning and to our future growth, and enabling a green economy and enabling a new economy as we go forward. Instead of being stuck backward, we're trying to move it forward. By disclosing some of what is being put in these contracts, it also exposes us to the possibility of not getting those future investments.

Don't take it from me; take it from LG Energy Solution. Together with Canada and Stellantis, they say:

[We aspire] to become the world's leading battery manufacturer by powering EVs in North America. LGES will position itself as a critical player in setting up a battery value chain in the region as we provide solutions to our potential customers through our collective, unique technical skills and mass-producing capabilities.

They also say, and this is relevant to this contract, that "Creating a joint battery manufacturing plant in Canada, one of the leading nations in renewable energy resources, is all the more critical for LG Energy Solution as we aim to power more EVs around the world."

It's not just about enabling the manufacturing in Ontario and in Canada, it's enabling us to be at the forefront of exporting to other parts of the world. Imagine, right now we don't have that opportunity. The members opposite will put at risk the opportunity for us to actually be at the forefront, just as they put at risk Avro Arrow back when they did away with that aviation strategy.

We cannot allow EVs to be at risk by doing what you're proposing.

Mr. Chair, the CEO of Stellantis said, "Our joint venture with LG Energy Solution—"

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The Chair: I'm sorry. We have Mr. Perkins, on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: This is the third or fourth time during this member's dissertation that I've pointed out relevance. He's not speaking to the actual amendment, which is about viewing the contracts in secret rather than in public as the motion says. Simply repeating what others have said in news releases or articles about their business plans is not relevant to the actual amendment.

• (1915)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

This has been brought up repeatedly. The amendment is a lot more narrowly focused than the motion itself. Therefore, the debate should be a lot more narrowly focused. I ask that you please stick to the amendment before we have to move on to another speaker.

Go ahead, Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Chair, I appreciate that.

Certainly the amendments that I put forward talk about the relevance of keeping some of the information confidential, with the ability for members opposite to review. I'm reinforcing that message because the disclosures by Stellantis say that their joint venture with LG strategies is a step to achieving an aggressive electrification road map. If they are competing in the U.S. and Canada, in the end, they said they're, "Grateful to the Municipal, Provincial and Federal levels of government for their support and commitment to help position Canada...", and this—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

I didn't hear a reference there to the contracts being secret in that quote, so I'm wondering about the relevance.

Again, I think you have warned him—

Mr. Charles Sousa: It's not about secrecy.

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa: The member opposite keeps saying it's secret. It's not secret. Nowhere in here does it say secrecy; it says disclosure. It refers to versions of the agreement by which we will disclose, and provide...receipt..."under the supervision of the clerk", so that members can see it. It talks about other stakeholders and other relevant matters in this contract that are affected by the reckless nature of what the opposition is trying to do, which puts in harm's way the very people I'm speaking to.

They are saying that they are not to be trusted, that Canada can't be trusted to set up an agreement and keep things confidential, and that Canada's not a place to make investments and to receive foreign direct investment.

They are telling people outside Canada that free trade doesn't matter here, that we do not protect free trade, and that we are going to be the kind of government that is going to disclose and put our prosperity at risk because we want to see the contract. Fine.

The amendment would give members the opportunity to see it, but not to jeopardize the deal by showing it to the general public and to their competitors.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Can I interrupt you, Mr. Sousa, for another point of order?

Mr. Rick Perkins: I don't believe a single quote that he had from the company mentions anything about whether or not there's a commercial restriction on this being released publicly. I think he's making things up, and it's not relevant to his motion.

The Chair: I am reading your amendment, Mr. Sousa, and you're not actually referring to it. You're not referring to anything in your amendment that you just stated. Could you stick to your amendment, please?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Mr. Chair, it is all about my amendment. I'm not trying to challenge anyone here. Given the fact I put the amendment forward, I recognize the purpose of the amendment, and the purpose of the amendment is to provide some confidentiality. That is what I'm talking about, and that is what you're putting at risk.

LG Energy Solution, the leading global manufacturer delivering advanced lithium batteries to electric vehicles here in Canada, is suggesting that this investment occurs because of that trust. Stellantis, the leading global automaker and mobility provider to offer clean and affordable solutions, is adopting this because it can trust us.

Details of this agreement are subject—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Sousa, but I'm going to interrupt you here.

To those at the back of the room, and on all sides, I realize this is captivating for everyone—and probably the four or five people watching on CPAC at home—but if we could have....

Mr. Majid Jowhari: You're being generous.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I know.

Can we take any conversations outside? It is also especially difficult for those listening on translation.

Mr. Sousa, go ahead.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Mr. Chair, you are being generous. I'm not sure how many people are actually watching this, but I think many of them will actually pay attention to what's written. I think members of the industry, stakeholders, union workers, investors and other jurisdictions around the world will be paying attention to what we conclude. They'll want to know if we're to be trusted. Can we do business in Canada where we will provide agreements that are subject to commercial confidentiality, that cannot and should not be disclosed—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Perkins, please go ahead.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Once again there is a repetition issue. He keeps saying the same thing over and over again about some sort of mysterious commercial harm that'll be done in some theoretical, fairy-dust world that the member lives in. I ask him to stop repeating, as per the rules I pointed out earlier in the big green book we all abide by.

• (1920)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Sousa, please continue, but be aware of the ongoing issue that we're dealing with today, which is the relatively narrower scope of the amendment.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am listening to the obstructions by the member opposite and others, and the issue of the fairytale. This is a serious matter, and the amendment that I have put forward is a serious matter.

The member opposite is suggesting that this is a fairytale. These are real jobs, real investments, real money and real economic growth. We have now been able to achieve a tremendous number of investments and foreign direct investments that would not have happened if we were not there negotiating and supporting them.

The member opposite doesn't like to hear about the amendment that provides the ability to review the documents while still maintaining confidential information. Confidentiality, in the end, is at the heart of the issue. He wants to suggest otherwise.

I say, once again, that the partnership in this is not just the Government of Canada having a contract with foreign workers or foreign companies that are bringing in skill sets and building construction to the tune of \$3 billion to \$5 billion of their money first. It is more than that, and the agreements will specify some of that.

We're going to give the opportunity for that to be reviewed, but with sensitivity around those confidential matters. That is why I am reaffirming, in my discussions here, what LG Energy is saying, what Stellantis is saying, what the mayor of Windsor is saying, what the union leaders are saying, and what the Conservative Government of Ontario is saying.

The details are confidential, so that means that they need to do due diligence to have that completed before disclosures. Disclosures will occur. Plant constructions are scheduled to begin later this year, with production operations planned to launch some time in 2024 and the facility to be operational by 2025. We don't want to jeopardize that opportunity.

To say that somehow this is all a fairytale is at the crux of why the amendment has been put forward. It is about dealing with the facts. The fairytales and the fairy dust that is sprinkled around this deal are manufactured through innuendoes and misinformation. It is unfortunate that this is done in such a way to dismantle and jeopardize those very jobs that are coming to this country.

The member opposite has suggested that things are broken, that there's nefarious activity, and that somehow all of these negotiations were done on the back of an envelope. I have no idea where he's getting his information. We will provide that information. The amendment enables that to occur, and I would encourage us to be sensitive about the confidential matters as a result.

I have restated—and I don't want to repeat myself—for the benefit of the member. I don't want to reaffirm that, but let's bring it into another context, then, for the benefit of the discussion around this amendment.

If we look at all of our different ridings across this country, we will see that the supply chain that comes from this investment, an enablement of this investment in Windsor, in Hamilton and in northern Ontario, where we're doing some of the mining for this battery operation has a huge pickup for Canada.

There are ripple effects that are not even based in this contract, but we know the economic benefit will occur. I just implore us to be sensitive to that, too, and to think long term. Avoid election psychopolitics, please. Stop considering this as what you're going to do tomorrow for your YouTube hit, what you're going to do for your social media or what kind of partisan stuff we're going to do. Forget that for now.

Consider what it really means for your future, your children's future and your grandchildren's future and what it means for Canada to be at the forefront of a new economy and a green economy. Do not put that at risk. Allow this amendment to proceed in a way that protects those confidential matters.

• (1925)

You have a duty and a responsibility to do that. You are the member and representative, not just for the Conservative Party or the Liberal Party; you are a representative for Canada. You need to do what's right, and this enables us to do what's right for that reason.

Mr. Chair, I will take a break for now.

The Chair: Thank you.

When you were saying “you”, I am assuming you meant me.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I meant you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, I will be worrying about my kids' future.

Next up is Mr. Jowhari, please. Then we have Ms. Atwin, Mr. Kusmierczyk and then Mr. Berthold.

Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to ask for my colleagues' indulgence for about a minute or two so that we don't have the relevance conversation because, in my initial intervention, I talked about five elements. I talked about the willing partner. I talked about the transparency and the way we are being transparent. I talked about the fact that we need to keep the integrity of the process. I talked about the accountability. I talked about the fact that the hiring plan submitted to the Government of Canada during the process of incentive negotiation is available, regardless of whether what we're going to look at is redacted or unredacted.

This conversation started as, “Oh, my god, we're going to lose 1,600 jobs. All these jobs are going to be taken over by foreign workers.” I think that myth is being demystified. Now we've realized, “Oh my god, there is a hiring plan.” This hiring plan is actually talking about some labour, some experts coming in on a temporary basis to train our guys, to implement the hiring plan and to make sure the system is safe. Then they're going to move away.

Now, what is left? What is left to talk about is, “Why don't you guys want to publicize the contract? Why don't you want to have it open?” Well, that's where the sixth element comes into play. That element is responsibility. That responsibility is talking about the risk of us making full disclosure, as opposed to calling it “secrecy”.

What is the risk of us actually making this contract fully public and open without us even having had the opportunity to look at it?

I'd like to go back to the notion of reasonable doubt. Is there reasonable doubt that by making publicly available the unredacted contract there could be any risk as to the current investment, or a potential loss of the jobs that we are already counting on?

I also want you to think about whether there other investments and other negotiations ongoing that could potentially be put on pause and move Canada from the leadership position that we are in. That brings doubt to the countries and to the organizations that have cautiously made the decision to come to Canada and invest and are in the process of negotiation.

Will they think, “If somebody doesn't like it, then something shows up in social media. Now all of a sudden, they're going to say, ‘let's make that contract public’”?

Think about putting this contract up. Potentially, individuals who are in ongoing negotiations will look at the terms of the contract and say, “We are not competitive,” or, “We should be more competitive,” or, “Oh, we're way too competitive.”

There is a risk. This risk is an unintended consequence.

As MPs, as representatives of Canadians, as the ones who have fiduciary responsibility to make sure that we mitigate risk, are we actually introducing a risk, an unintended consequence, by opening up the contract that puts the Government of Canada, the leadership in the world and investors coming to Canada at risk?

What would happen if we were considering exporting our SMRs or our CANDU reactors to a different part of the world, and all of a sudden the terms of the contract and our intellectual property were going to be opened?

What would we think as the Canadian government? Do we want to operate in that environment?

• (1930)

Now that we are over the fact that there is no ticking bomb, that there aren't 1,600 foreign workers coming over to take over the jobs, we're going to say that the real issue is that we should make the contract public, which is more risky.

I talked about the fact that it is our responsibility to mitigate risk. How we mitigate risk is by managing the disclosure of the document. How we manage risk is by ensuring that we make that document open to all of us. We are the representatives of Canadians—at least I'm the representative of the 100,000 people in my riding. They trust me; they voted me here. I'm going to have access to that document. I'm going to look at it. I'm going to ask what sections of it are going to get redacted and if it is going to put Canada at risk. I'm going to ask that question because, one way or another, we as members of Parliament, regardless of the motion and how it goes, are going to get access to the unredacted contract, and we're going to read that contract in a room.

I'm not willing to be part of a group of MPs who are going to put the interests of Canada and the interests of Canadian workers at risk by not thinking about unintended consequences. I'm not going to put the fact that our government proactively may be negotiating other terms, other battery plants.... How about if you're negotiating on the technology around carbon capture?

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

We just had, in the last two or three minutes, a total repetition of what he said in the first few minutes of his speech. He's going back to this theoretical—

Mr. Majid Jowhari: With all due respect—

The Chair: Just let him—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I would invoke the repetition provisions of page 1059 of the big green book: that you're not to repeat when you're filibustering.

The Chair: Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do disagree with my colleagues. I am trying to highlight various risks that are associated with the position that the colleagues opposite are taking. I'm trying to give examples of what these risks mean and how it's going to impact....

The impact, at the end of the day, is about the fact that the risk of exposure, without our initially reviewing it, is high. I'm asking that we raise reasonable doubt. Let's look at the fact that there is reasonable doubt, that if we go back and make public an unredacted document, we may run the risk of nullifying a contract that exists. We may put 2,500 jobs, plus the 1,600 jobs that are making the plant, at risk. The plant, in a week, is about ready to install the machinery. Are we ready to take that risk? Is my colleague across the aisle,

whom I listened to very carefully and very attentively when he was talking passionately about the jobs in Windsor, willing...?

MP Masse, are you willing to put those 2,500 jobs, plus the 1,600 jobs, at risk as a result of an unintended consequence? Do you believe there is reasonable doubt that our publicly reviewing an unredacted contract...? There is a reasonable risk. That's going to be the issue. That's the heart of the issue. That's the heart of the amendment. The heart of the amendment—now that we know there is no labour-related ticking bomb—is the fact that we have to be responsible.

• (1935)

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

I think we should allow MP Masse to answer the question posed to him.

The Chair: Mr. Masse will eventually have his turn.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Yes. Thank you.

The Chair: I'm not sure if Mr. Jowhari wants to go down that road, but yes.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: I listened to Brian for hours, and I believe I was the only one who was listening to him.

What are we going to tell Canadians? If there is reasonable doubt that we are exposing ourselves by making this disclosure as an unintended consequence, are we going to tell Canadians that we're sorry? What are we going to tell those 2,500 employees? What are we going to tell Stellantis and our other partners internationally? We are sorry; we thought there was a ticking bomb. There is no ticking bomb. There are no international laws any more, because we decided to respond to an article from CBC or social media posts, or something like that. Is that what Canada has come to?

As I said, if you are sitting at the negotiation table and are watching this, you're going to say, "Holy crap, is this what contracts and disclosures are going to look like?"

All I ask is a simple question. I would really love to know how many contracts our government is negotiating and how many of those are on pause because they're actually looking at the outcome of this committee. If you think this is irrelevant, I beg to differ. This is extremely relevant. Why? It's because we are risking many things. We are risking the Canada that has set itself to be a leader. We are risking the fact that we are saying that Canada is a safe place to invest. We are risking jobs. Therefore, it is extremely relevant.

We're at the point when we have come to suggest, as an amendment, "Let's look at the contract, unredacted." We will ask, as input, from Stellantis or whoever designed the contract, which parts are extremely confidential. We will have a real look at it unredacted. We'll look at the contract and we'll get an idea of what needs to be redacted.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Let the company decide that.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Let the company decide—I agree.

Mr. Rick Perkins: That's a clause in the contract. Why are you deciding?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Yes, but the whole point of it is that I am looking at the contract and I'm not making it public. If you're going to make the decision for the company to decide what they want to redact, then we don't have an issue. Let's agree to the amendment to the motion we put in. Let's get the redacted contract from the company. Let's bring it into a closed meeting. We have it unredacted and redacted, we look at it and we mitigate that risk.

We eliminate that reasonable doubt that exists. We eliminate the fact that our partner countries are looking at us right now. There may be five Canadians looking at us on CPAC, but I'm telling you that there are a lot of other countries and trade commissioners looking at us to see what we are going to come up with. Do you know what? Going back to Canadians and saying, "Oh, I'm sorry," is not going to work.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: I definitely—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Perkins, you have a point of order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: In the vicious circle that we're in with this statement, the member earlier said—and I think this is the issue of repetition—that we would get an unredacted contract. Now he's saying we'll get a redacted contract, so in the circle to spin wheels and spend time, he seems to be confused.

• (1940)

Mr. Majid Jowhari: That's not a point of order. This is a debate.

Second of all, the member across misunderstood me.

The Chair: That's actually for me to comment on, and not you, Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: I'll go to the clerk any time to ask the clerk to—

The Chair: Allow me to finish, please.

I am now actually writing notes of everyone's comments about the repetition, so please be on point and continue, Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you.

The key thing is that our amendment is saying that we want to have access to an unredacted copy of the contract. Great. We are going to look at that. We also get a redacted copy from the company and we compare the two. It can't be any more transparent. By doing this we would be mitigating the risk of doing potential damage as a result of unintended consequences of full disclosure. It's a reasonable doubt that we may not only impact this contract and this job but also other negotiations and other contracts.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order. It's repetition.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Do we have the right to do that?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Impacting other contracts that are theoretical.... He's said it about five times now. If you're keeping notes, I'd count that as number six.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Number six is responsibility, sir. Number six is about risk mitigation. Risk mitigation is about protecting Canada as a leader. It's about a safe place to invest. It's about mak-

ing sure that our government demonstrates that we protect jobs. It's also saying that we, as members of this Parliament, are exercising our fiduciary responsibility to ensure that we don't expose the Government of Canada and the Canadian...and our agreement internationally to risk. That's why it's relevant. That's why it's important for us to take the amendment and move on. We are going to get to the bottom of this. I assure you that it's going to be a success story for the government, and it's going to show how we deal with our contracts in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jowhari.

Next on my list is Mrs. Atwin.

Go ahead, please.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'll mention right off the top that I appreciate everyone's time this evening. I know it's getting pretty late there. It's a little later here on the east coast, as well.

I'll be as clear and direct as possible, of course. I really want to reiterate that it's important for me to outline, for my constituents, for stakeholders and for Canadians who are paying attention to this.... I believe that people are paying attention to this. There was some back-and-forth about that earlier, but I really do feel that Canadians are concerned about this. It's important for me, again, to outline my position, my rationale in deciding on this amendment. For me, Mr. Chair, of course, it's about facts, and it should be for all of us who are engaged in this very important discussion.

Again, how did we get here? It started with a social media post by the Windsor Police Service. That's really where this discussion began. It cued the online misinformation mill and then, unfortunately, made its way to the House of Commons and into our very important standing committees—with limited resources, I might add.

Here are some facts.

"There is nothing new about Canadian firms leaning on foreign professionals when launching new industrial projects."

"There isn't a single, mass-scale battery cell production facility operating in Canada. This is the reason Stellantis opted for a joint venture with LG Energy in the first place: to tap into this technical expertise."

The "transferring [of] Korean nationals into Canada [through NextStar] exists only because of the Canada-Korea Free Trade Agreement — an agreement negotiated and signed by the Conservatives themselves back in 2014."

We have to ask ourselves, again, the following: What's different now? Why are we doing this?

Another piece that I think is really important—and Madam Vignola mentioned this a bit in her intervention—is that there are problems, of course, in some of Canada's programs regarding the possible exploitation of migrant workers. I certainly agree with her in her concerns for the well-being of these workers.

The answers to that really important debate, which I hope we have and which I hope there's a lot of discussion on—at another time, of course, and not in this committee because I don't think it's appropriate—will not be found in the documents, redacted or otherwise, that we are discussing here with this amendment.

Again, we're going to stick to the facts and stick to why this amendment is important for us to really focus on.

Facts, again, eliminate the concerns raised by our colleagues, and that's why I'm going back to some of the things that they've mentioned.

Here is another fact: “Without comparable government supports for battery plants—”

• (1945)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mrs. Atwin, but we have a point of order.

Go ahead, Ms. Findlay.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I don't understand the relevance of the member's interventions. We're not talking about the abuse of temporary foreign workers or whatever it is that she's talking about. I don't see that it's relevant to this amendment.

The Chair: Thanks.

Mrs. Atwin, perhaps you could stick to the amendment.

Colleagues, I've brought this up several times. We seem to be debating the main motion and not the amendment. If we continue down this road, I'll stop recognizing people, and we will go to the vote on the amendment. Please stick to debating the amendment, and then we can use all of these arguments, I'm sure, for the motion itself.

Mrs. Atwin, please go ahead. I realize that you're probably going to summarize a couple of things in advance and then get to the amendment itself.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Certainly, Mr. Chair.

Again, it's important for me to outline my rationale.

I know that Ms. Findlay wasn't in the room earlier. That's when one of our colleagues actually raised that specific point about the well-being of temporary foreign workers, which I wanted to address in that comment.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

If I had been in the room and her colleague had mentioned that, I would have made the same point of order about relevance.

It isn't for some speaking to an amendment to talk about what someone else said that was also irrelevant to the amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Evidence will be recording it all, so we do not need a repeat.

Please go ahead.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Certainly, so much of this conversation focuses on workers, and that's really where my approach is right now.

I really want to point out, again, another fact: There has been one temporary foreign worker permit issued and advertised, which led to a lot of the discussion that led to the original motion and, of course, our amendment, which is all relevant.

When a temporary foreign worker permit is issued, a labour market impact assessment is done, and the permit is only issued if the company can prove that eligible Canadian workers are not available for that job. Again, it speaks to some of the confusion and, I would argue, the inappropriate use of the “replacement workers” term that has led to why we're all here this evening.

Many of us, in our offices, were inundated. This was IRCC'S work, as I'm sure many of the members are familiar—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

Where is the relevance to the motion about why the contract should be secret versus public to the Canadian taxpayer? It's not about whether or not there are jobs created.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

I will repeat, Mrs. Atwin, that you seem to be debating the original motion and not the amendment itself. Again, we always give a wide latitude to discuss issues, but I ask you to, please, get to the discussion of the amendment itself.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Certainly, Mr. Chair.

Of course, the amendment is about whether or not we're willing to risk these very important investments, the reputation that we have here in Canada, and the possibility of deterring future important investments like this. They have the potential to transform our economy, and I am thinking specifically about those in Windsor. We've heard a lot about that this evening.

It's important to know that investors need to have clarity that we're not going to play games with their contracts. I really believe that's what this is about, and that's really what I have tried to explain this evening with my facts that I really want to focus on. Again, for me, this is about games. I find it incredibly reckless, and I don't want to participate in those games.

I certainly support this amendment that allows our committee members to have access to the information they seek. We really want them to have good peace of mind. This is about good governance. It's about all of us representing our constituents in the way that we would want them to know that they're represented, in the interests of transparency and accountability.

I think it's incumbent upon all of us to come together and see that this is the path forward, that we look at the information and that we do it in an appropriate setting while, again, protecting the interests of this very important and transformative contract.

Because of the risk of being repetitive, Mr. Chair, I'll leave it there.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thanks, Mrs. Atwin.

Now we have Mr. Kusmierczyk, please, and next we will go to Mr. Berthold, Mr. Masse, Mr. Sidhu and then back to Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to talk about an issue that I believe is central to this discussion and to this amendment: the issue of intellectual property rights.

We've talked a lot about public trust. We've talked a lot about trust. I believe that it is important that when companies partner with the federal government on major investments—like the \$5-billion battery plant in Windsor, the Northvolt battery plant in Quebec, or the \$1-billion battery plant in B.C.—those companies have trust in the federal government, in that partnership.

We talk a lot about what we're protecting in some of these sensitive contracts. I believe that one of the central considerations is intellectual property rights. Intellectual property rights can be, for example, patents, copyrights or trade secrets. That's important because the businesses enter into an agreement or a partnership with the federal government, and there is an expectation there that this information will be protected.

I am proud to say that my dad, who is a retired electrical engineer, worked his whole life in the automotive industry. He worked for a large manufacturing company and—

● (1950)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Sorry, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: My dad was an electrician, not an electrical engineer, but I don't see any relevance to what our fathers did for a living to the amendment before us, nor do I see, speaking as a lawyer, any suggestion that intellectual property rights would be relevant to this discussion. There are no diagrams and there are no schematics. This a contract, and there are no intellectual property rights in the wording of a contract.

The Chair: Mr. Kusmierczyk, go ahead, but again, I implore everyone to stick to the amendment, as you started out with.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: The reason I raise my father being an electrical engineer is because he devised a number of patents. They were registered with the United States patent office, and they're hanging in our house—

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Kusmierczyk, there is a point of order.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Probably everyone here knows what a patent is, knows how you go about getting a patent or why, but that has nothing to do, I would suggest, with the relevance—

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): We don't.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Well, Mr. Sidhu, you can find out with a Google search.

It is not relevant to the amendment before us. That's what we're debating.

The Chair: Mr. Kusmierczyk, go ahead, on the amendment.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: I appreciate that. Let me just finish my thought here before I—

The Chair: Before you do, you're getting a bit noisy in the back again, folks. You're missing a lot of riveting information; I'm sure you want to pay attention.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Chair, our colleagues in the opposition are basically throwing out points of order like candy here. Is there a quota? I mean, there has to be a quota here because every two minutes we get interrupted. We can't seem to finish our thoughts here. I'm just wondering. Are we just going to see point of order after point of order after point of order here?

The Chair: There have been a lot of points of order, but to be fair, I think we've gone quite past fairness on relevance and repetition on the amendment itself. If we're ready to vote on it and people have stopped being able to debate on the amendment itself and want to get to the motion that we seem to be debating a lot, let us do so, but if we just get back to debate on the amendment, I'm sure we'll have fewer points of order.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Chair, we're talking about confidential information and why it needs to be protected. We're talking about sensitive information. We're talking about competitive information advantages. That's why we're talking about intellectual property and trade secrets, which companies do not want to share with the rest of the world, specifically with their competition.

● (1955)

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: You can say irrelevance all you want, but this is the absolute heart of the issue.

The Chair: Sorry, we have a point of order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: The contract has a provision in it, as the member well knows, because I know he listened very intently to my comments on this. It has a provision that allows the commercial company to redact the commercially sensitive things. You would know this if you paid attention to my speech the way we were paying attention to your riveting speech. You're not relevant.

The Chair: Mr. Perkins, I'm sure you'll get a chance the next time you're up.

Mr. Kusmierczyk, please speak to the amendment.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Absolutely. Let me tell you why talking about intellectual property is relevant.

Let me read a quote from Gowling entitled “Lithium-Ion Batteries in Canada: IP Considerations”. It is an article that was written not too long ago, on July 27, 2023. The subtitle is “Main challenges for Canadian companies from an IP perspective”. Let me highlight some important elements.

On “Protecting trade secrets”, it states:

The battery industry relies on closely guarded trade secrets, such as proprietary manufacturing processes and sensitive data. Ensuring strict confidentiality measures internally and during collaborations is critical to safeguarding valuable intellectual property. Protecting trade secrets can be challenging in international markets, as the level of legal protection and enforcement may vary between countries. Companies operating globally must be aware of the legal landscape in each jurisdiction and take appropriate measures to safeguard their confidential information.

If a company enters into a confidential contract with a partner, I assume that they don't want that contract to be made public, and there's information there that is important and must be guarded. “The battery industry relies on closely guarded trade secrets”. “Ensuring strict confidentiality measures internally and during collaborations is critical”.

We had a big issue in NCAA football during the last couple of weeks, where the University of Michigan Wolverines were accused of stealing signs at a football game. The coach of the team was suspended because they were accused of stealing signs, and that's a football game. That is how seriously they take sign stealing.

How seriously do you think a company takes contractual information, proprietary information, intellectual property and strategic information?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Read a contract.

The Chair: Mr. Perkins, let him speak.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: I read to you that companies pay very close attention to how secret and confidential information is guarded in a jurisdiction. Do you think that a company—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order about repetition. He keeps circling the block on the same issue about some mythical intellectual property, which never makes it—

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mythical intellectual property, my word.

Mr. Rick Perkins: —into a contract about how much government subsidization is going to happen on a battery.

I would ask that the repetition rule be enforced since he doesn't seem to come up with any new arguments. He's said this one for the last 15 minutes, starting from his dad's property rights.

• (2000)

The Chair: Okay, I get the gist, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Kusmierczyk, please continue on the amendment.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Yes, on the amendment dealing with contracts, confidentiality and the importance of being responsible with information. That's exactly what we're talking about here.

If Canada wants to be seen as a serious partner—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order on repetition.

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: I have a point of order on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: You can do your own but not....

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Mr. Kusmierczyk has the floor, Mr. Jowhari and Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Chair, I'll be honest and say that the only repetition I see is the point of order after point of order. We're supposed to be having a serious discussion about a serious issue. Some of us are trying to act like adults here and talk about a serious issue.

Let me talk about—

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Kusmierczyk, on the amendment.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: —the importance of patents and how countries and companies take seriously the issue of protecting information.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order. The amendment to the motion before us is not about patent law. It's about a contract for a government subsidy. There's no relevance to patent law.

The Chair: I'm sure Mr. Kusmierczyk will get to it. Continue.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Chair, this is a conversation about risk. If a company enters into an agreement with a company for a \$5 billion investment, and when they sign a contract or agreement that is confidential, if we cannot honour that contract and that confidentiality, then what does it say about the climate of intellectual property protection in this country and about Canada as a serious partner?

Mr. Rick Perkins: On a point of order, this is repetition.

The Chair: Allow him to get to it.

Mr. Rick Perkins: He's saying the same thing.

The Chair: I know, Mr. Perkins. Let him get to it.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: That is the fundamental point.

Let me provide some facts here. I want to talk about patents and how important they are.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Actually, I am going to interrupt.

Mr. Kusmierczyk, you will need to get to the amendment. The amendment has nothing to do with patents.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: It absolutely does.

The Chair: I understand if you're able to loop it in a minute or something, that's wonderful, but please get to the amendment or we can move to the next speaker. We have a lot of interested people.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Chair, again, this is it. This is exactly why we are trying to steer a middle road that protects confidential and sensitive information. What do you think the words "sensitive information" mean?

Mr. Rick Perkins: On a point of order, this is repetition.

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Mr. Perkins, allow him to go, and I will interrupt him if I believe he's repeating.

Continue, Mr. Kusmierczyk, but please get to the point.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: This is the point. I want to highlight how important confidentiality is to some of the countries here. China issued 1.58 million patents last year. The U.S. was second on the list with 503,000; Japan had 405,000.

Number four was the Republic of Korea with 272,315 patents. I would suggest, Mr. Chair, that our Korean partner LG cares about confidentiality and about keeping certain strategic information confidential. This is a country that is ranked number four in terms of patents. I already mentioned that, on batteries alone, LG has 24,000 patents. It is important to them, when they do business in a jurisdiction, that it's a jurisdiction that takes confidentiality seriously—and we do.

There are other considerations that we have to look at as well. What else is inside those contracts? It could be intellectual property. It could also be industrial design, industrial plans or blueprints. We don't know. It could be partners—

• (2005)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

It is my understanding that in testimony at this committee it was confirmed that this contract very much mirrors the contract of the deal with Volkswagen that this government agreed to. There are no designs. There is no intellectual property. There's no patent information. None of this is relevant to this contract.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: I appreciate that, Ms. Findlay, but I don't feel—

The Chair: Colleagues, please.

Mr. Kusmierczyk, if you could, just continue, please.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: With all due respect, my honourable colleague does not know the contents of that contract. I am not

willing to risk a \$5 billion investment in my community because of that.

Yes, there are certain things—safeguards—that I would put in place because I would like to make sure that we are not putting at risk 2,500 jobs and a \$5 billion battery plant in my community. That's why I take this seriously.

I talked about partners and suppliers and business operations. These are all important pieces of information that companies want to keep close to their vests. This is important.

Not only do companies want to keep their strategies close to their vest, but so does the federal government.

Why is that important?

It's important because when the federal government is negotiating with businesses and trying to bring them here, it also has a strategy. Providing our strategy, revealing our strategy to the world completely weakens our negotiating powers. It weakens significantly our negotiating power.

Why does showing our hand do that?

Other jurisdictions can then adapt. I'll give you an example. We succeeded in landing the Stellantis battery plant. There are things in there that talk about what our strategy is. What are some of the incentives, what are some of the things that we used, strategies to bring that company to Windsor. It could have located in any jurisdiction in the world. They chose Windsor. Other jurisdictions lost out on that investment. Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Mexico, other jurisdictions that fought hard to get this investment lost out.

Do you not think that they are looking at every possible angle and advantage to see what adjustments they need to make in order to be able to lure that same battery plant away and also lure other investments away as well?

As I've said before, if we publish all that information, we might as well hand the keys to that battery plant to Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Alabama and Tennessee.

Those living in manufacturing communities have been paying very close attention over those last two decades to where those investments have been going. South of the border, they have advantages. They have advantages there. The American states and the federal U.S. government have unlimited resources. They go hard after every investment, and we're willing to give them the playbook? We're willing to give them our signals?

Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Rick Perkins: The IRA will throw you a copy. It's not a secret.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: This isn't funny, Mr. Perkins. This is not funny, sir. No one in my community is laughing about this. This is serious.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Sorry, let me interrupt you, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Please make your point of order quick, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: No one is laughing at the need for jobs. What we're laughing at are the weak, subjective arguments that you're making about the United States, which has nothing to do with the motion before us.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Perkins.

• (2010)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: This is everything.

The Chair: If you could resume, I will note that you are starting to get into some repetition with the discussion of the States.

If we could, please, let's get to the amendment.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: It is important. It's not just the auto industry.

Do you not think that there are shipyards in Quebec that receive federal funding and are looking to get—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: —a national contract.

The Chair: Mr. Kusmierczyk, hold on one moment. There's a point of order.

Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: This is about the four auto contracts. It has nothing to do with shipyards, absolutely nothing. You have to stick to the motion.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: This has broader implications, Mr. Perkins.

The Chair: Please bring it to the amendment.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Yes. We are looking at revealing the contracts for four manufacturers related to the auto sector. You don't think that other industry partners are looking at this and are concerned about the precedent that's being set here? How would shipyards in Quebec, which deal with sensitive military information because they have military clients, feel about this? How would they feel if all of a sudden on a \$5-billion contract we revealed the confidential agreement and contract?

I don't see Irving or Davie or others publicizing their contracts and their information so that their competitors can get a competitive edge. What are we doing here? This completely undermines our entire industrial strategic policy.

What are we doing? Shipyards, naval ships, aerospace.... You think automotive jealously guards its patents, trade secrets and information. Aerospace, one of the most highly competitive secretive industries because every single piece of information is parsed and has strategic value.... What message do we send to our aerospace manufacturers when we say that we are willing to publish confidential agreements at the drop of a hat? Where is the responsibility?

Where is the responsibility? For those workers who would be impacted—shipyards, aerospace, automotive, manufacturing—are we serious partners for manufacturing in this country? Heer Law is an

IP company in Canada. It has a report titled “Statistics on the Value and Importance of Intellectual Property”, which asks:

How important is intellectual property?

Intellectual property is an economic driver in Canada, the U.S., Europe, and increasingly around the globe:

51% of Canada's economy is represented by knowledge-based industries;—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order. He's reading a patent document. There is no mention of the word “patent” in the amendment to the motion.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Oh my word—use your imagination, Mr. Perkins.

The Chair: No. I think we have reached the point where we really need to please get back to the amendment as such, if we're ready, if we're done—

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Chair, just let me finish—

The Chair: Mr. Kusmierczyk, if we're done with discussing the amendment, we can vote on it and get to the motion that everyone seems to want to debate today, as opposed to the amendment.

Can we please get to the amendment? I'm happy to read it out again, but it seems very specific about restricting access to the contracts in camera for a very short period. Can we get to that amendment, please?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Chair, I would like the clerk to weigh in on this argument of repetition and what exactly.... If I can understand, because I see that argument being used over and over.... I'm trying to understand. Maybe the clerk can provide me information on what does that mean, repetition...? I'm asking the clerk to clarify what is meant by repetition because—

The Chair: You cannot pose questions directly to the clerk. I'm happy to address it and then pass it over.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Chair, no, I'd like to continue speaking, as I do have some more things to say, but I'd like to know what repetition, in your mind, Mr. Chair, means.

The Chair: I will read from the big green book, as it's referred to:

...the Chair may, at his or her discretion, interrupt a member whose observations and questions are repetitive or are unrelated to the matter before the committee. If the member in question persists in making repetitive or off-topic comments, the Chair can give the floor to another member.

It's something that's at my discretion. We always allow things to stray, but we should be on the amendment. There are a lot of things with a lot wider scope on the motion itself, and it seems that people are determined to debate the motion and not the amendment to the motion.

I'm very happy if we wish to vote on the amendment and we can move to the motion that everyone seems so preoccupied with. Until then, we are on the amendment.

• (2015)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Chair, I appreciate that, but I don't understand how you can rule that talking about protecting confidential information is not relative to an amendment that wants to protect confidential information. This is incredible. We're talking about the importance: Why is it important to protect confidential information in a manufacturing industrial setting? I'm hearing that it's not relevant to an amendment that's trying to protect confidential information...? What kind of Kafkaesque discussion are we having here? I don't understand.

The Chair: If you look at the amendment itself—and I'm happy to read it—

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Please.

The Chair: —you will see that it talks about how, when documents are received from the clerk, they're available for the clerk's viewing. Nowhere does it state any concerns about losing businesses, business, investment, or those such issues that seem to be repeated again and again.

I sat through the public accounts committee with regard to the vaccines, it was exactly the same arguments made by Pfizer, Moderna, the government—PSPC—and various stakeholders. We actually had them in committee, and they admitted that, yes, they'd never had any business pull out of a contract. I don't see anything specific about the confidentiality, the worry about companies pulling out.

We always allow a very wide breadth at this committee, and I'm happy to continue that, but we do need to get closer to the amendment as such.

Again, we allow a wide breadth, but if we can get to the amendment itself...

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: This is why this is relevant. I am going to read part of the amendment to the motion. The new paragraph (f) states that the documents “be available at the clerk's office for viewing by committee members only, for one week to be designated by the committee no later than 30 days following the receipt of the contracts” and that “the supervision of the clerk and that no personal mobile, electronic or recording devices of any kind be permitted in the room”.

Why are we guarding confidential information? I would say that we're putting forward a reasonable path. We're allowing all members of Parliament around this table to take a look at the unredacted document, everything in it—everything—but at the same time, we're saying that we want to provide some safeguards here that keep certain information out of the public realm because it undermines the contracts. It undermines the confidentiality that, in the business world, the real world of business and industry, is absolutely vital. That's the point I'm making.

Again, as the Heer Law report states, “51% of Canada's economy is represented by knowledge-based industries”. Think about that for a second. What we do here, the precedent that we set here tonight, has the potential to impact half of Canadian companies—half—because they are knowledge-based industries. That's the precedent we're setting here today, and that's why we are being so careful with it, and responsible. Think about it: 51% of knowledge-based indus-

tries that care about confidentiality, care about trust, care about what information is shared.

My goodness, I talked about the shipyards. I talked about aerospace. Telecommunications is another sector—same thing. I can go down the list of all the industries—all the industries—that are based and operate on trust and confidentiality and that jealously guard their information and their strategies.

We are willing today.... We have a path forward, as put forward by my colleague, who has been in business, understands it, has been in the real world and understands the importance of confidentiality of agreements. He has put forward an amendment that achieves that, allowing us to have that level of accountability, of oversight, but protect Canada's position as a trusted leader, a trusted partner, with a reputation that we have spent decades building. That is why this is important in this committee. That is why it matters. That is why partners and stakeholders in our community need to know the discussions that are taking place here and the positions that MPs around this table are taking.

I'm not willing to undermine a \$5-billion battery plant in my community for a TikTok video—good luck. I'm not going to sign up to that and I'm not going to sign up to weakening Canada's position as a trusted partner in manufacturing, in industry, in aerospace, in telecommunications. Trust is important.

We were sent here to represent our communities. It's a fundamental role of democracy. That is the sacred and hallowed contract between us and our communities. We understand that, and that's why we're putting forward the opportunity for members of Parliament representing their constituents to take a look at the contract. I'll tell you, I see the campaign of misinformation and disinformation whose sole purpose is to erode national support and trust in the battery plant that is so important to my community.

• (2020)

Now, we've opened up a second front. By this original motion, we want to undermine the world's trust in Canada. We've had \$30 billion of foreign investment in just the last two years. We're number three in terms of foreign direct investment in the world. Countries are coming to partner with us to build things here and to lead the world here. Do we want to tell them that they can't trust us, that they can't be partners and that we don't believe in confidentiality? This is what's at stake here—this is what's at stake.

When companies can't trust the federal government and partner with us, and if we can't secure their information and their strategies—you can call it intellectual property, patents, strategies or information—then they're gone. They're gone.

Who pays the consequence? It's not the people around this table, I'll tell you that much. It's the workers. It's Canadian workers. When we are not acting responsibly, it's Canadians workers who pay the price, because the business goes elsewhere. Man, the margins are so tight when you're competing for investment.

We know that capital is mobile—it's global and can go anywhere—and we're literally giving them reasons to go elsewhere. We have 20 million Canadians working right now who are depending on us to make reasonable and responsible decisions.

There is an amendment here that is reasonable and responsible. I honestly cannot understand why that middle road, that middle way, the compromise and responsible path forward, is not adopted by the members of this committee. I don't understand it.

There are four companies here representing close to \$30 billion of investment. There's Stellantis in Windsor. There's Volkswagen in St. Thomas, another community that has known hard times and has lost investment and manufacturing plants to other jurisdictions. There is Northvolt, a company that wants to set up shop in Quebec—3,000 workers in Quebec. You don't think they're looking at this circus and having second thoughts and having a pause? What kind of partners are we? There's Umicore in Loyalist, near Kingston, a rechargeable battery plant—again, thousands of workers. This is what we're putting on the line here.

I go back to President Lana Payne of Unifor and the article she published in the Windsor Star, which I believe was published nationally as well. Lana Payne is the president of Unifor nationally, which is the largest private sector union in all of Canada, with 300,000 members. The title of her opinion piece is “Canadians deserve better than misinformed battery plant debate”. They certainly deserve better. This is what Lana Payne writes:

Never let the truth get in the way of a good story.

The famous quote from American author and funny-man Mark Twain helps summarize the firestorm surrounding Windsor's NextStar battery plant.

What started as an innocuous social media post from, of all groups, the Windsor Police Service has become a fire-and-brimstone level debate in this country.

It's a national debate.

● (2025)

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: We are discussing national issues of importance here in this committee.

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Kusmierczyk, but Mr. Perkins has a point of order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I think that's the third time this member has read that same newspaper article into the record.

An hon. member: No, this is the first time.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: I haven't read this part.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: He says “this part”. Help us all and stick only to the new part, Mr. Kusmierczyk, please.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: The article reads:

Anyone who knows anything about the startup of major industrial projects knows that it takes a lot of different people, in many different jobs, to pull these things together.

It goes on to say:

For one thing, there is nothing new about Canadian firms leaning on foreign professionals when launching new industrial projects.

Anyone who has spent half-a-second studying the auto industry knows there isn't a single, mass-scale battery cell production facility operating in Canada. This is the reason Stellantis opted for a joint venture with LG Energy in the first place: to tap into this technical expertise.

This is no different than what happens during a new vehicle product launch. In fact, teams of U.S. workers were temporarily brought over the border to help get the GM Ingersoll plant up and running...

It's embarrassing, quite frankly, the tenor of political debate on this issue.

This is the important part:

And it's doing a disservice to all of us who have been scratching and clawing to rebuild the auto industry into the powerhouse it once was—

I won't read the part where she says, “no thanks to harmful Conservative trade policy or economic ideology.”

Finally, it reads:

No one has more at stake in this matter than Canadian autoworkers.

I will just read the last part. I appreciate your latitude, Mr. Chair. It reads:

This NextStar battery plant will provide jobs to help transition workers, including Unifor members, displaced in the EV shift. And it is the linchpin for future EV assembly Unifor members will do in both Windsor and Brampton.

Without comparable government supports for battery plants as provided by the U.S, this plant would have been built south of the border.

It's as simple as that. But in today's politics, why should facts get in the way of good story?

Mr. Chair, I move that the committee do now adjourn.

● (2030)

The Chair: I have a motion to adjourn.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

The Chair: Colleagues, we are adjourned.

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