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# Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

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Chair: Mr. Kelly McCauley





## Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

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• (1205)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC)):** Good afternoon, everyone. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 137 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

As always, I will remind you all to keep your headphones away from your microphones so that we do not cause problems for our very valued interpreters who are helping out today.

Before we get to an opening statement from Mr. Clark, I just want to hand the floor over to Mrs. Vignola for about a minute or so about a very important anniversary.

Go ahead, Mrs. Vignola.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for giving me this time.

Yesterday was September 11. I would like us to take a moment to remember the Canadians and Quebecers who lost their lives alongside Americans on this sad day in our history.

That day, my parliamentary assistant experienced it first-hand as part of a delegation from Quebec that was supposed to attend meetings in one of the towers.

I would like us to take a moment to remember an incident that we hope no one ever has to live through again.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mrs. Vignola. We appreciate your words.

Mr. Clark, we're going to hand things over to you for five minutes for your opening statement. Please go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Thomas Clark (Consul General of Canada in New York, United States, Consulate General of Canada in New York):** Mr. Chair and committee, first of all, good afternoon. Let me start by commending this committee for taking up this matter.

When governments sell and buy official residences involving millions of dollars, parliamentary scrutiny is completely understandable. At a time when many Canadians and many Americans are facing housing challenges, they have a right to know why and how decisions are made to buy and sell official accommodations. Canadians have the right to know whether these transactions result in value for money and how and whether they advance Canadians'

interests. Parliamentarians are the right people to pose those questions and to get those answers. I hope to be helpful in that endeavour today.

I have the honour of leading Canada's Consulate General in New York, a role I took up on February 27, 2023. This is one of Canada's most significant diplomatic posts. It is responsible for five states—New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Delaware—as well as the island of Bermuda. This region has a combined GDP of more than \$6 trillion and a two-way trade with Canada of more than \$200 billion a year.

[*Translation*]

In New York City alone there are about 300,000 Canadian residents and thousands more who come here on vacation. The consulate provides all of them with essential government services, including emergency consular service when required.

[*English*]

The consulate is also in the heart of the American media capital, where Americans' opinions of Canada are often formed, created and amplified.

[*Translation*]

My work encompasses all of these aspects and many more. Essentially, the consul general is there to promote and defend Canadian interests, encourage trade and investment, and strengthen co-operation on a whole range of bilateral issues at the municipal, state and federal levels.

[*English*]

To do this work, I am given certain tools to do the job. I am assigned a residence to both live in and use for work. That means using it for certain types of meetings, receptions and dinners. It is Canada's house in New York.

Since I arrived, I have held 38 events at the residence. Most recently, last week I had a reception for New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy and his delegation on the eve of their trade and political mission to Canada, with visits to Ontario and Quebec. Other events, such as dinners, have centred around venture capital, private equity, political outreach, AI public policy and the arts.

• (1210)

As you have already heard in testimony from Global Affairs Canada officials, I had no role whatsoever in either deciding to sell the former residence or buying the new one. That was completely undertaken by the property bureau in Ottawa. I was not involved in the selection of the new property, its amenities or its location. As you have heard, this project will return millions of dollars to Canadian taxpayers, which I'm sure all of you think is a good thing.

I also want to let you know why I was unavailable on August 27, when you first invited me to speak with you. I was on leave with my children and my grandchildren. I am very pleased and thankful that the committee accommodated my appearance today.

Finally, I would like to tell you why I accepted this job as consul general in the first place. After a 45-year career in broadcasting and five years as a senior business executive, I was looking for an opportunity to give back, because I believe that anyone who has done well because of Canada, or in my case because of Canadians, should give something back to the country that gave them so much. This job allows me to do just that, using my experience and my personal networks in the service of Canada.

I am extremely proud of the work my team here in New York does for Canadians, advancing and protecting their interests every single day.

Mr. Chairman, I now look forward to answering any questions the members may have.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Clark.

We'll start with Mr. Barrett for six minutes, please.

Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Clark, how long were you residing in the old residence?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** From the time I arrived, February 27, 2023, until today.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** The listing for that property describes it as a “masterpiece”. Is that right? Is that how it's described?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I know nothing about real estate.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Well, you're here to talk about it today, so I hope you're prepared to turn your mind to it.

The Prime Minister visited you in New York City on April 27 of the year you moved in. Is that right?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I believe that's correct. He was here on a mission.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Did you host the Prime Minister in the residence?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I did.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Did you show him around?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Around the residence...? No.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** You didn't show him around.

Did he comment on the look of it?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** No.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Just to confirm, on April 27 you and the Prime Minister were in the residence that was deemed unfit for you to continue living in. Is it correct that you were there on April 27?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Yes—along with about 80 other people.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** On April 28, the next day, you were in the limo with him in New York. Is that right?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** That's correct.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Were there any conversations regarding renovations, upgrades, moving, the former occupants of that condo or you now occupying it, or any change in discussions regarding which representative in New York was occupying that space? Did that come up at all?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** None whatsoever.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** We have government documents that detail how talks on getting a new residence intensified immediately after the Prime Minister visited you. You asked him for a new place: Is that right?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** That's incorrect.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** You were in the motorcade with the Prime Minister, after he was just in the place deemed unfit for you to continue to live in, and you never said, “Look, buddy, thanks for the job; I could use a new jewelled onyx powder room and a handcrafted copper tub”?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** No, I did not.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** How much representational space is there in the new residence?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Representational space would represent the majority of the space in the new residence.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** That's interesting. The dining room, living room and jewelled onyx powder room come to about 860 square feet. Does that sound about right to you? That's what the listing says.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I have no idea about square feet. I would refer you to the property division at Global Affairs, who handles this.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Okay. That leaves about 2,700 square feet for your personal use and 860 square feet for representational. That's 2,700 square feet for your personal use. Canadians are on the hook for paying \$9 million for 860 square feet when a perfectly good joint representational space is available at the same property that you're joining us from today. Is that right?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Your numbers can't be right, because that does not represent reality.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Okay. What is the percentage of representational space in the new location? Please bring us back to reality.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** That is a question, Mr. Chair, that should be addressed to the property division at Global Affairs Canada.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** You had a great deal of certainty to tell me that I'm wrong, but you certainly don't know on what basis I am. I'm referring to exactly the documents that were provided to us by the department that you're now referring me to.

GAC's real estate agent told us that you personally visited the new luxury condo once the selection had been made. Was this a final vetting?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Not at all; it was after the offer had been made to buy it that I first saw it.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Did you ever take a moment, as someone who spent a career in journalism, to question the Prime Minister or anyone on the opulence of this location amid the backdrop of the cost of living crisis we're facing here in Canada, with StatsCan saying that one in four Canadians will be using food banks to feed themselves and their families this month? Did that ever occur to you?

• (1215)

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** As I said in my opening statement, Mr. Chair, I am well aware of the challenges being faced by both Canadians and Americans when it comes to housing. In this case, I was not involved in any way, shape or form in the decision to buy this new residence or sell the old residence. That is entirely in the hands of the property division of Global Affairs.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** When you host functions at the event, do you personally prepare the food? Is it done by your personal chef, or are these events catered?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I do not have a personal chef, nor do I cook the food, thankfully.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** These are catered affairs. We were told by the real property division that the necessity for this was that the shared space you have at the office you're in now wasn't suitable to host functions because there wasn't a kitchen to prepare meals. If the meals are being brought in, couldn't they be brought into your office that you're now speaking to us from?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** The bylaws of New York City prohibit us from having a working kitchen in the office. It would be illegal, in fact, for us to put a working kitchen in this office, and—

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** If it's catered, it seems moot whether or not you have a kitchen in there.

We've been told that you're responsible for all of the trade success between Canada and the United States. Can you tell us exactly—just the number, sir—how much trade business you have generated for Canada?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** First of all, Mr. Chair—

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I'm just looking for a number.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** —I don't know where it was said or who said that I was responsible for all of the trade between Canada and the United States.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Since you don't have the number, and I'm out of time....

Canadians want to know: You're the \$9-million man, and they want to know what the value is for Canadians. Sir, keep your bags packed in that new place. Conservatives are going to fire you.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Barrett.

We will go to Mr. Jowhari for six minutes, please.

Go ahead, sir.

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

First of all, let me welcome you, Mr. Clark. Thank you for coming to the committee. Thank you for clarifying a number of things. I strongly suggest that you do not pack anything. We need you now more than ever.

Mr. Clark, let me start with a couple of clarifying questions that you haven't had an opportunity to put on the record and that I would like see put on the record. Did you have anything to do with the purchase of the new residence and the sale or disposition of the old residence?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Nothing whatsoever.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Thank you.

Did you at any time talk to anyone regarding a desire for relocation?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Never.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Did anyone talk to you about the need for the move, at any point or any level?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I was aware, as the head of mission, that there were discussions going on with the property division. I was not part of those discussions. I did not involve myself in them in any sort of way.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Thank you.

You mentioned the head of the mission, so let's talk about the mission. Let's talk about the great work that the mission is doing and the one that you're leading. You talked about how the diplomatic post in New York is responsible for five states. You mentioned that it is responsible for six trillion dollars' worth of opportunity. You talked about the \$200 billion in current trade that's happening.

Just for Canadians, Canada's GDP is usually around \$2.1 trillion to \$2.2 trillion, so the mission is actually responsible for trade in the order of three orders of magnitude. Do you want to make any comment on the size of the opportunity that exists for Canada?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Yes, and I want to make it very clear that any success that we have had in terms of trade with our region and with Canada is not because of me solely. I am merely part of a team down here that has done remarkable work. Let me give you a few examples because I think this was asked for in a previous question.

Since April 2022—which are the last numbers that we have until now—we have made 65 foreign direct-investment referrals to communities in Canada, including 161 economic outcomes for Canada, 35 new partnerships and much investor business in Canada. We have also facilitated investments, including, as I said last week, the visit of Governor Murphy from New Jersey. These are very positive results that are being made by the mission and the people here at the mission.

● (1220)

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** That's great. Thank you.

You also talked about some of the border provinces that really heavily rely on you and the mission to be able to facilitate a lot of conversations with their counterparts in the United States. Can you shed some light on that one for us, please?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Thank you.

We regularly host ministers from the Ontario government and from the Quebec government. As you say, these are border provinces to my territory, but we've also had visits from the Premier of Prince Edward Island. It really is key for Canada that the supply chain in particular on some critical matters—whether it be critical minerals or energy in particular, which is a big issue here—directly affects the trade between Canada and the United States, but more particularly the trade among those two provinces and the five states that I represent here.

We do outreach into Canada, but more importantly, we encourage people—we encourage all politicians, in fact—to come down to New York to tell our story, to help us tell the story.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Thank you.

It's interesting that you talk about how you encourage all the politicians from all parties to come to Canada. I was looking at the document that was provided by Global Affairs Canada, and I want to thank you for all of this information. There were quite a few names, politicians from all colours, including the former Conservative leader of the official opposition, Mr. Erin O'Toole; Manitoba's former Conservative minister of finance; and the Conservative Premier of P.E.I.

Can you talk about the portfolio of these politicians across the spectrum, for the individuals across the spectrum? What is their focus area when they come to New York and who do they meet with? What kind of facilitation do you do?

I only have 45 seconds, so I yield the floor to you for the rest of the time.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I'll be very brief.

When they come down, they are meeting with investors on Wall Street, and we have very good connections there. We put provinces and investors together along with their own teams who have the understanding of the economic opportunities in New York for provinces.

In the case of Mr. O'Toole, I just decided that this is somebody who probably has some wisdom to impart, so I invited him over for a meal at the residence because I thought that was the right thing to do.

At this point, Mr. Chair, I am probably out of time.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** With five seconds left, I yield the rest to the chair.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

Mrs. Vignola, you are up next. You have six minutes and two extra seconds from Mr. Jowhari.

Go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Clark, for being here today.

I'm not sure I understood your answer to one of the questions you were asked.

When were you first informed that Global Affairs Canada was looking for a new official residence?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I will try to answer questions in French, but I might have to switch to English.

My first visit to the residence was on April 26, but April 12 was the first time I heard that there was interest in the property.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** All in all, it was quite soon after you took office, on the day before the Prime Minister arrived.

I've seen some things, but I needed information about your—

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** If I may, I would like to make a small clarification, madam. That was in April 2024, not April 2023.

● (1225)

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Okay, thank you for that clarification.

I knew nothing about your career, so I had to do my homework. I can't know everything about 39 million people. I found some very glowing comments about you. According to other comments, you are a “Laurentian elite liberal media personality”. To be honest, I have no idea what that means. I understand that you are a media personality but are you liberal? Are you part of the Laurentian elite? More to the point, what is the Laurentian elite?

What led you to become a consul? Was it your professional background, liberal ideology or the Laurentian elite?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Thank you for your question.

Over the 45 years I worked as a journalist, I was neutral. In other words, I showed no partisanship toward the Liberals, Conservatives, NDP or Bloc. I've never lived in the Laurentians, and I am not part of the elite.

The only slightly political thing I did over all those years was serve as a moderator during a Conservative Party of Canada conference while they were electing their leader. I did that twice. I provided a service, but that does not mean that I'm a Conservative. Even now, I'm not a Liberal, Conservative, NDPer or anything else.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you for that clarification.

You say that you served as a moderator twice. What led you to do that?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** The Conservative Party asked me to.

[English]

I was asked by the Conservative Party twice to moderate leadership debates. I charged nothing for this. This was not a paid gig. I felt that it was a service and an engagement in democracy, and I felt that, from time to time, journalists who have the ability to do this sort of thing should be doing it to increase it. It is not an endorsement for any party or any candidate. It is simply a way of participating in the democratic process. I thought it was the right thing to do, and I did it twice, never for any party other than the Conservatives.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you very much.

On August 21, 2024, an official from Global Affairs Canada told the committee that the Minister of Foreign Affairs was not involved in the purchase of the new official residence. She added that the minister's chief of staff was informed of the purchase in June 2024, before the closing date.

Why did your team inform the chief of staff to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the proposed purchase of the new residence? Is that standard practice?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I have no idea. As I said at the beginning of the meeting, I was not part of the process.

[English]

I was not involved in the process. I did not know when the minister was informed or not informed. That was never in my line of sight—ever.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll now go to beautiful British Columbia.

Mr. Bachrach, go ahead, please, sir.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Actually, I'm in beautiful Montreal this morning. I wish I were back home in British Columbia, but I'm on the road. I'll be seeing everyone in Ottawa starting Monday.

Mr. Clark, thanks for joining our committee. I appreciate your remarks so far. I also appreciate your recognizing the importance of this conversation, given that we're in a housing crisis and given that, for a lot of Canadians, \$9 million for a condo in New York seems like a lot of money.

People may not be familiar with the role of your office and its importance to our trade relations with the United States. My colleagues have asked important questions about the timing of things.

I think we're getting a little bit of a better sense of how this decision was made. I'm wondering if you can talk about the longer-term investment in Canada's diplomatic corps and how that has changed over time.

I understand that you're relatively new to this role, but you obviously talk to other people in the diplomatic corps. You probably have a sense of where we stand at this current moment when it comes to investing. I don't think anyone would deny that, in order to be effective in these roles, the government has to invest in them. We've seen different decisions made by different governments over time.

Where do we stand now, and where have we been in the past?

● (1230)

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I am, as you say, the wrong person to ask about history, but I can, perhaps, be helpful in talking about what I have been able to see during my time here, which is that when we invest in diplomacy we get results. When we do it properly, and that is to say efficiently, using money as wisely as we possibly can, it increases the effectiveness of what we are doing.

I really don't have many views. I haven't seen our other residences or offices. I did as a journalist when I travelled the world. I guess what I would say is that we are a G7 country. We are important on the world stage. We will be even more important on the world stage as we transition in many areas of production. I think we have to understand that, while our friends are our friends in the G20 and the G7, they're also our competitors in places like New York. They're after the same pie I'm after. We have to be nimble. We have to be effective. We have to do it as best we can, keeping the taxpayer in mind and understanding that the more efficient we can be, the better we are.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** I appreciate that, Mr. Clark. I think the concept of efficiency is a challenging one when we're talking about what to many people seems like a luxury condo in one of the most expensive real estate markets in the world.

I am interested in this comparison between Canada's representation in New York and that of our competitors, our peer countries, other G7 countries and beyond. You obviously visit the residences of other people in similar positions. How does Canada's representation in New York stack up when it comes to our peer countries?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I would say that, overall, we're probably lower middle in terms of our presence here. If you're looking at residences, recently the U.K. spent \$22 million to buy its residence. I believe Italy spent \$35 million. Yes, we have spent \$9 million, but we are returning as much as \$7 million, or perhaps even more, to the Canadian taxpayer. That has to be taken into account as well.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** In your introductory remarks, you mentioned emergency consular services, which is an aspect of the role you play and the role of this particular property, I understand. Could you expand on what those emergency services are and how it would work for someone who's in New York and requiring emergency consular services?

Would they visit the residence? Is it a property that accepts Canadian citizens who are in New York and in need of help? How does that work?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** If you're in need of help in New York, the last thing you want to do is come to the residence. What you need is the help of our terrific consular team here.

As I said in my opening remarks, we have 300,000 Canadians who live here. We have thousands and thousands more who come to visit for Broadway or sports or just to see New York City. Some of them get into difficulty. We help them 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We help them with the authorities. We help them with lost passports. We help them get through what are very difficult times. I can tell you that our consular division here is superb. They offer services to Canadians that are indispensable to those who find themselves in difficulty in New York.

• (1235)

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** I don't doubt that they do. What I'm interested in is the specific role of the residence in providing those emergency consular services.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** No, the residence does not play a role. We have many Canadians who come to the residence, but not Canadians who are in distress.

**The Chair:** Thank you, gentlemen.

We'll now go to Mr. Brock. We'll start with our five-minute rounds.

Go ahead, Mr. Brock, please.

**Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Mr. Clark, although you have not been sworn in or affirmed to tell the truth, every witness who testifies at a parliamentary committee is expected to tell the truth.

Have you, sir, told the truth to the committee so far?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I have, every word of it.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I have a package of emails from the government, emails from the chief of staff to the assistant deputy minister of Minister of Global Affairs Mélanie Joly of Trudeau's government. She wrote a summary of the \$9-million condo purchase. The email states that both the consul general of New York and the head of mission—that's you, Tom Clark—"have been instrumental throughout this process," with the head of mission—again, you, Mr. Clark—"providing the greenlight for the selection of the new residence."

It is in writing by the department that Tom Clark—you, sir—was instrumental in the condo purchase on Billionaires' Row.

Again, Mr. Clark, when did you raise the need for a new residence with the Liberal government?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Mr. Chair, I will repeat: I had no role whatsoever in deciding to sell the old residence, in buying the new residence or in its amenities or its location. That email you're referring to has a couple of addendums to it that I think are important.

Number one, it was corrected. That was a person who was not involved in the process of this. I only became aware of this email less than 48 hours ago. I too was taken aback by what was in it because it was simply wrong. It wasn't true.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Mr. Clark, let me stop you right there. I don't believe you. Canadians don't believe you. Are you trying to suggest that a head of mission in any country in the world would be completely shut out, would be completely uninvolved with the acquisition of their own residence. No Canadian believes you, sir.

This was not a typo. This was a deliberate, focused sentence regarding your involvement. The timing, sir, is crucial. The email I referenced was sent out on June 17, 2024. The story of the \$9-million condo on Billionaires' Row became known to the Canadian public on July 11. That was a huge embarrassment to the Canadian government, and I'm sure a huge embarrassment to you, Mr. Clark.

Your involvement was documented well before. We have the receipts. The department's pathetic attempt to cover up for you was issued on July 25, after all of the controversy and after all of the push-back from politicians and from Canadians, who are struggling to put a roof over their heads, who are lined up at food banks, who are starving. People who were going to the food banks were actually donating to the food banks, and you're sitting on Billionaires' Row sipping coffee from a \$6,000 coffee machine. You can appreciate how appalling that is to Canadians.

Again, sir, I ask for honesty. When did you bring up the need for a new residence?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Mr. Chair, I will repeat once again, and please, if you wish, you can put me under oath for this. I had nothing to do with the decision to sell the old OR. I had nothing to do with the decision to buy the new OR. I had nothing to do with deciding on its amenities or its location.

• (1240)

**Mr. Larry Brock:** It's funny, Mr. Clark. Nineteen previous consuls general to New York, since 1961, all enjoyed the lavish amenities and the wonderful location in midtown Manhattan of the Park Avenue residence until you, sir, were appointed to the position. Within months, sir, of your being appointed to the position, and within months of Justin Trudeau's visiting you and your hanging out in a motorcade in downtown New York with streets closed, all of a sudden there's talk about a new residence and a push to get you into Billionaires' Row.

You said at the outset that you'd rather be in Central Park, and now you're overlooking Central Park. You got your wish, sir.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Mr. Brock, I am not overlooking Central Park. I am not in a tower.



**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Clark, I have to interrupt. That is our time, but you'll probably have a chance to respond in our next intervention with Mr. Bains.

Mr. Bains, I'm going to assume you at least are in beautiful British Columbia.

Go ahead, sir.

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

Thank you, Mr. Clark, for joining us today, and thank you for your service.

As you know, Richmond, British Columbia, is a border community and a hub for goods and travel across North America and the Asia-Pacific. The efficiency of the flow of goods and services is something that's critical to the growth of not only our city but also the wider B.C. economy and the Canadian economy.

How does your mission in New York facilitate trade relations between Canada and the United States?

We also share a coastline. Clean waterways are top of mind, and those kinds of conversations and dialogues need to happen. How involved are you in those conversations and the work that needs to be done there?

Before you get to your answer on that, you could clarify about the communiqué that was passed along, to which you said there were several amendments that were incorrect. Perhaps you can clarify that, and then, if you will, you can get to my question.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Sure. I just want to make it very clear, because I think we need to have facts on the table here. This new residence does not overlook Central Park. It is on the 11th floor and overlooks West 57th Street in New York City.

In terms of that email, as I said, I was only made aware of this less than 48 hours ago and was taken aback. It clearly didn't represent anything that was going on. In that package that you have, there is an explanation from Global Affairs Canada as to why that was incorrect and why that was publicly corrected. My testimony and that of GAC officials stands. Without question, I was not involved in any part of the process.

Getting to the core of your question of what we do, I'd like to point out that the way we facilitate trade is not just by sitting in New York City and talking to people here, although that's a very important part of what we do. It is also getting out into our territories, going into small towns, talking to the local chambers of commerce, talking to people on the streets and in coffee shops, letting them know who we are and finding out what they're thinking about.

Since I arrived here, I've conducted 14 such outreach visits throughout my territory, resulting in 70 different meetings, and I can tell you where they all were. Also, I've gone to Washington, D.C., a number of times, again, to speak to federal members who are in Washington who represent the area that I am responsible for. When I talk about facilitating trade, it is in terms of both trying to find for Canadian companies and trying to enable Canadian companies to find those investors here in New York who may be able to

help them either expand in the United States or expand in Canada, creating jobs for Canadians.

Similarly, we deal with Americans who want to send money to Canada to build plants and create jobs for Canadians. Essentially, that is the core of what we're trying to do. We are trying not only to increase the trade but, to put it another way, to increase wealth for Canadians and increase the number of jobs for Canadians, because, after all, nothing is more important than that.

• (1245)

**Mr. Parm Bains:** Thank you for that.

I'll continue on that line of questioning, and I assure you that I won't bully or intimidate you like members across the way, who seem to be inspired by the recent American presidential debate and are wanting to fire people.

Can you speak to your plans going into the fall and the new year for growing Canada's business footprint in the United States?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Yes, absolutely. We have a couple of things coming up that we're extraordinarily proud of.

Last year we started our first conference on critical minerals here in New York. We invited down from Canada junior miners, people who have known deposits of critical minerals. We brought them together with investors here in the United States to see if we could make a match.

In most business dealings, as anybody involved in business will tell you, it doesn't happen overnight. This is a process. Investment is a process. Along those lines, we're there to try to accelerate that and to try to widen the opportunities for those investments to be made. Right there, at that conference on critical minerals last year, I think one or two investment deals were made. We're looking for patient capital here in New York. Patient capital is important for critical minerals and that's important for us.

Going ahead, we have a number of CTAs or climate tech accelerators, which are very big for us, bringing down Canadian technology looking for investors in the energy transition mode. We do this for a whole range of industries, but climate tech is a very big one. It's coming up in Climate Week New York, which is later this month, as a matter of fact.

**Mr. Parm Bains:** I'm looking forward to that.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thanks, gentlemen. That is our time.

Mrs. Vignola, you have two and a half minutes, please.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Clark, there are currently mechanisms in place to ensure that there is no political interference in the purchase of Global Affairs Canada real property. Owning real estate around the world is a good thing, in my humble opinion, because it gives us places where we can engage in diplomacy, which is the basis of many of our ties.

That said, we are now in a situation where we need to look into the matter. That is a good thing, because \$9 million is not exactly peanuts.

How can we better ensure that taxpayers' money is soundly invested without there being even a shadow of a doubt of any interference?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** First of all, everybody has to tell the truth. The documents have to reflect the truth as well. I believe that is the case in this situation. As you said, \$9 million is a substantial amount of money to Canadians.

However, keep in mind that, once the other residence has been sold, \$7 million will be returned to Canadians. It's not just a matter of buying one residence and selling the other.

The people who deal with properties at Global Affairs Canada are the experts; I am not.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left? I think it's 45 seconds.

[English]

**The Chair:** You have about 30 seconds.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Okay.

Mr. Clark, very quickly, explain to me why some receptions will be held at the official residence rather than at the consulate. What is the advantage of one over the other?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** That's a very good question. Allow me to explain it in English to speed things up.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, please give a real brief explanation.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Diplomacy is never "or". It's always "and". I have a range of tools that I can use. The mission here is one. The residence is another. Travelling is another. You choose which is most appropriate for the moment and for the occasion.

In the residence, it is more intimate. It is more secure. A lot of the people we entertain there appreciate the security of the residence. Larger events may be best held in the mission, but as I said, it's not one or the other.

• (1250)

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, I apologize. I have to cut you off there, because we're quite a bit past our time. Thanks very much.

Mr. Bachrach, please go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Clark, you referred to this communiqué that indicated that you did in fact have a role in the selection of the new apartment.

Then you referred to the amendments thereto by Global Affairs officials.

For people who are following along and perhaps watching the webcast of this meeting, could you characterize, in your own words, the rationale for the amendments? That's for the folks who are watching.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Sure.

The memo, or the email, that you're referring to was simply wrong. These things happen. People get things wrong. All the other documents that you have point in the other direction. This is unfortunate. It was unfortunate for the person who wrote it because it was simply wrong. I mean, what can I tell you? It's not what happened.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** It's just hard to imagine someone writing a memo and including information that has absolutely no basis. I can't imagine, you know... I'm thinking about officials who are writing these memos, and I'm struggling to understand why someone would put something in there when it's entirely non-factual. Do we know who wrote the memo? Who was responsible for that fairly grievous oversight?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Yes, we do. It's in the package. Nothing is redacted in that, by the way. Her name is Emily Nicholson. I have not ever met Emily Nicholson or spoken to Emily Nicholson, but I share with you the astonishment that something would be written that is so completely wrong.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Mr. Chair, perhaps it would be appropriate for the committee to invite Ms. Nicholson to appear as part of this study to provide, in her own words, her rationale for writing the original memo in the way that she did. If that's in order, I would make that a motion at this time. Maybe we can do it by unanimous consent.

(Motion agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

**The Chair:** We seem to have agreement with that. Leave it with me and the clerk.

Thanks, Mr. Bachrach. You have about five seconds.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** I'll hand those seconds back to you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Bachrach.

We're now going to go to Mrs. Kusie for five minutes. After that, we're going to take a very short suspension so that we can do a voice check for Mr. Hardie, and then we'll continue with Mr. Hardie.

Go ahead, Mrs. Kusie.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Clark, it's very concerning because there are some inconsistencies in the timelines and the testimony that you are giving the committee today.

I'm just going to outline the first one that is very concerning to me, as well to as the committee.

You were appointed in February 2023. Then we see you in a motorcade on April 28, 2023, with the Prime Minister, the individual who does the appointments, and in that video, in the motorcade, you say that, in fact, the Prime Minister was over at your place the evening before—the residence—on the 27th. Then, lo and behold, Global Affairs Canada, which had put the project of a new residence on hold, all of a sudden, after your appointment, your dinner with the Prime Minister and then being in the motorcade with the Prime Minister, decides there are issues with the current residence and that it is time to look for a new residence—a \$9-million residence, apparently. Isn't that convenient?

Can you elaborate for the committee again, please, what your implication was in discussing the new residence with the department and with the Prime Minister? When did you first bring it up with the Prime Minister?

The chronological timeline would definitely indicate that you had conversations with the Prime Minister about the residence. I mean, isn't it funny that you would be appointed, you would have dinner with the Prime Minister, you would be in a motorcade with the Prime Minister, and lo and behold, Global Affairs Canada decides that it's time for a new residence after that visit? Isn't that funny?

Just tell the committee now when you had the conversations with the Prime Minister about the new residence because that's what happened. Isn't that right, Mr. Clark?

• (1255)

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** No, Mr. Chair, it's completely wrong. I never spoke with the Prime Minister about the old residence, the new residence or any residence. The Prime Minister was not over at the residence for dinner. It wasn't just him and me. There were about 80 people there, including the mayor of New York City and the head of BlackRock investments, as well as a number of other people.

However, the core of your question is when I, or did I ever, speak to anybody about this? The answer is unequivocally no.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Clark, it's very hard for me to believe this. It's very hard for this committee to do this. Let's stop the lying.

I'm going to go to another timeline that is just not very supportive of your testimony that you have not had these conversations with the Prime Minister.

There is an email, internal to Global Affairs Canada, stating your involvement, outlining your involvement. That was sent on June 17 of this year. All of a sudden, in the media—which I know is your friend—a story breaks on July 11 of the \$9-million condo purchase. Then this email, this internal email, is sent on July 25, which shows that you personally green-lighted this project. Lo and behold, this July 25...or correcting it. Pardon me. It was correcting it on July 25, further to the July 11 email that highlighted your green-lighting. This July 25 email, lo and behold, is one day after the committee passed the motion demanding your appearance.

Again, this is another timeline that is very damning to your evidence, to your testimony here today, Mr. Clark. Why don't we just stop the lying?

When did you have a conversation with the Prime Minister about the necessity for a new residence? Just tell the committee, please.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Mr. Chair, when we get to the point of accusing people of lying, I think we are in very dangerous territory.

I will state once again for the member that I had nothing to do with the decision to sell the old residence or to buy the new residence. I did not speak to the Prime Minister about either of those transactions—ever.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** We have the documents, Mr. Clark. We have the documents that indicate that you personally green-lighted this project. Lo and behold, so conveniently, after your time with the Prime Minister back in 2023, shortly after he appointed you, we know that you had conversations with the Prime Minister about purchasing this \$9-million residence on the backs of Canadians. Now we have the email trail that proves that as well.

You have tried to cover it. Global Affairs Canada has tried to cover it. The email paper trail does not lie. I'm not buying this. This committee isn't buying this, Mr. Clark, and Canadians aren't buying it.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Let me interrupt for a second.

That is our time. We'll do your point of order. Then we'll suspend quickly so we can get Mr. Hardie checked voice-wise.

Go ahead, Mr. Jowhari.

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

I understand that Mrs. Kusie wants to use the term “we”, and the committee—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Is he citing a standing order in this point of order, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Please let him finish the point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Jowhari.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Thank you.

I just take issue with the point. Not every member of this committee is of the same opinion as Mrs. Kusie, so—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Which standing order is he citing in this point of order?

**The Chair:** Mr. Genuis, please let him finish.

Are you finished, Mr. Jowhari?

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Yes. I just wanted it to be on the record. The Liberals are not of the same opinion as Mrs. Kusie.

**The Chair:** I appreciate that.

We're going to suspend for a few moments so we can do a voice check for Mr. Hardie.

• (1255)

(Pause)

• (1300)

**The Chair:** We are back. Thank you for your patience.

Mr. Hardie, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Please, go ahead, and welcome to OGGO, sir.

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As a fellow recovering broadcaster, Mr. Clark, I think it's always worthwhile to look at the current situation and then look for normative information. Is this new? In fact, it isn't.

I want to quote a 2010 media report at a time when we were trying to recover from the financial collapse. The report said as follows:

Federal spending on Canadian embassy properties and diplomatic residences abroad has soared 430 per cent since Stephen Harper's Conservative government came to power on a promise to rein in the diplomatic decorators.

After years of trying to move from owning embassies to leasing them, Foreign Affairs is now building a number of new ones, including in Moscow (\$8.3 million), Damascus (\$6.4 million), Prague (\$4.8 million), Dhaka, Bangladesh (\$4.2 million), and Stockholm (\$4 million).

The media report went on to say:

Construction of a new embassy in Pakistan has already cost more than \$7 million just for the land and preliminary plans.

The largest single embassy project detailed in the public accounts [in 2009] was in Kabul, as Canada [prepared] to withdraw from its combat mission in Afghanistan and expand its civilian presence there.

Spending on the project in the past year—

That means in 2009.

—topped \$20 million, including \$9 million for renovations, \$11 million to buy property and another \$1.4 million to clear it of possible landmines.

This is kind of the history of what has gone on in the past.

Next to that, the situation in New York in this age of rage, as we're witnessing this morning, seems to be quite mild, so I want to turn back to you, Mr. Clark, to talk about the importance of the efforts that Canada makes.

We saw U.S. protectionism under President Trump, and it's not out of the question that we may see more protectionism, or at least moves in that direction, under whatever administration we have after November.

Can you talk about the value and the depth and scope of building the relationship and why perhaps operating out of a “no-tell motel” somewhere in the precinct of New York City wouldn't necessarily send the right message to the people we're trying to reach?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Thank you for the question.

One of the ways to explain that is to take a look at the five states that I am responsible for. Canada is the number one customer for all of those five states. In other words, we buy more from these states than the other three buyers combined—Japan, China, and France and the European Union. We are extraordinarily important to these

states, because about 70% of the stuff we send down to the United States also ends up as inputs into American products. We are very closely integrated.

I think the challenge for Canada is to continue to talk to American legislators of either party and say that we have become so integrated trying to separate that would be not only hugely costly and almost impossible to do from a regulatory point of view but also dumb, quite frankly, because it would hurt both Canada and the United States.

We're entering into an era now—and this is what I often say—when the route for the Americans to achieve their goals and what they want to do runs right through Canada, and for Canada to achieve our goals, our road runs through the United States.

It is no longer a question of “buy America” or “buy Canada”; it should be “buy North America”. We have to be thinking in terms of resilient supply chains. We have to be thinking in terms of the next time the world gets knocked down by a pandemic or a war. When all of these things are possible, we need to have supply chains that can be accessed within a couple of hours, because we're literally just up the road. We have in Canada the materials that are so necessary for the next phase of the global economy. We're in a terrific position in this country. It's a question of seizing the opportunities that are there, and that is really the bulk of our work, regardless of the outcome of the American election.

• (1305)

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Is it possible to say that we have good friends in the United States?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** We have extremely good friends in the United States. This has been one of the big takeaways for me as I travel around and meet so many American politicians, business leaders and so on. It's hard to find somebody who doesn't like Canada.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Great. Let's hope the age of rage is coming to an end, and we can get on with being civil to each other internationally as well as domestically.

Mr. Chair, that's all the time I need. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Hardie.

We'll now go to Mr. Genuis, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Clark, it's clearly on the record that you toured the new residence. Could you tell us, please, when you first toured the new residence?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I have that here, Mr. Chair.

It was April 26, after the offer to buy had been made.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** It was April 26. An offer had been put in, but the purchase hadn't been finalized. Is that correct?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** That's correct.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Okay.

From your perspective, what was the purpose of that tour?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** As head of mission, I was aware that this was going on. Once the offer had been made, I was curious.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Okay. The offer has been made, but the purchase hasn't been finalized. You're toured around this building, where you're shown the coffee maker, the golf simulator, the bedroom, the bathroom, etc.

Is it reasonable to presume that people who were touring you asked what you thought of the place?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** No. Nobody, not even the people from the mission, asked me what I thought.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** You were going on a tour with these folks, and at no point did they say, "Well, it looks pretty nice, eh?", or, "What do you think of this feature, Mr. Clark?" It was kind of a silent walkabout.

Is that sort of how it unfolded?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I was curious as to what it was that they had put an offer in on and I had a look. Nobody asked me what I thought.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** You had a look.

Usually when someone has a look at something, there's a conversation that unfolds, right? It would be unusual if you went on this tour of this new property and you were not asked for any comment whatsoever on the nature of the place or its suitability or not.

Would you have this committee believe that in the course of this tour, there was no conversation about any of those things?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** There was no conversation about whether I would approve or disapprove of what they were doing, because that wasn't in my realm of responsibility. I don't do real estate—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** You took time out of your day and you've talked about all the work you're doing there. Clearly, you're busy—

**Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, on a point of order—

**The Chair:** We have a point of order.

I'm sorry; I can't see who it is, but go ahead.

**Mr. George Chahal:** It's MP Chahal here.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Chahal.

**Mr. George Chahal:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've heard this from a number of speakers, and previously Ms. Kusie, and Mr. Brock in particular prior to that, and now Mr. Genuis is also leaning into his mic and speaking quite loudly and aggressively and—

• (1310)

**The Chair:** Mr. Chahal, what is your point of order, please?

**Mr. George Chahal:** My point of order is for the health and safety of interpreters—

**The Chair:** Mr. Chahal, let me just say this once, because I seem to have to say it every single time to new people on this committee:

If there is an issue with the interpreters, they will contact the clerk. You do not need to interrupt the proceedings.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. George Chahal:** Mr. Chair, if I could just finish, all I'm saying is I'm online—

**The Chair:** No, that's not point of order.

If there's an issue, Mr. Chahal, the interpreters will advise the clerk. I do appreciate your concern for them.

**Mr. George Chahal:** I would just ask, respectfully, if speakers could not speak so loudly or yell into the mics.

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** If he could not speak at all, we'd appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Genuis, please go ahead.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for showing Mr. Chahal how a committee chair is supposed to operate.

Mr. Clark, I'll go back to you.

You're describing a scenario that seems kind of fanciful to me. The purchase has not been completed yet. An offer has been made, but the purchase has not been completed, and you are brought to tour the property.

Normally, when somebody is touring a property that they might live in, in the course of that tour, a conversation is going to happen about the suitability of the place. If you were staying miles away from this decision, it would have been natural for you not to go on the tour.

Ostensibly, you had a reason for going on the tour, though. When you went on this tour before the property had been purchased, you were shown the glorious features and amenities of this property. You would have us believe that you said absolutely nothing about them and that nobody asked whether this seemed like a suitable place. There was no back-and-forth whatsoever. You just looked at it, were silent, and then walked back to your office.

Is that what your testimony is?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** That's what my testimony is. I was curious.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Okay. This is sort of—

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I was curious; that's why I went.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** You understand that the tour of silence, on top of the email that says you were involved, kind of suggests that members of this committee and the public have a reason to be a bit skeptical about aspects of your testimony.

I want to try to get one more question in.

The government is purchasing a \$9-million luxury condo for you to live in. We understand that a consul general would entertain guests in their residence, but obviously, the whole residence is not for entertainment. You're not going to be inviting prospective investors into your bedroom, for example.

Now, we have the floor plan of the new space. Would you accept that this luxury condo has a much smaller percentage of representational space and that the tradeoff is much less representational space and much more luxurious personal space? Would you acknowledge that, based on what you've seen in the tour?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** No.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Sir, we have the floor plans, and you're not entertaining people in every part of this space. The personal space is a much larger proportion, and it's much more luxurious than in the previous residence, which leans much more towards representational space. That's pretty clear in the floor plans, but are you denying that?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Yes.

**The Chair:** That is our time.

Mr. Chahal, we'll go to you, sir, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. George Chahal:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, now that you're allowing me to speak.

Mr. Clark, thank you for providing testimony today.

Earlier on, Madame Vignola mentioned or asked you a question regarding the usage of your space, and I think your time ran out. As I begin my questioning about the role and the importance of your space, I would just like to provide you with the opportunity to finish. If you want to add anything that you didn't get to add earlier when you were asked that question, please do so.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I appreciate that.

May I take this occasion to apologize to Madame Vignola for not being sufficiently conversant in French so as to give her the full answer in French.

Allow me to go to some documents here that will help you understand what we do in terms of the space. Each of the 38 events that I've held—dinner, lunches, breakfasts and receptions—at the official residence has always had one thing at its core, which is that it is a time to bring Canadians and Americans together. If I'm having a conference or a dinner, for example, on private equity and how that affects Canada, or on venture capital and how that affects Canadian companies, I have Canadian experts in that area come down, and we sit around a table with Americans. That is a very effective way of bringing people together and advancing Canada's case here in New York city.

The receptions themselves tend to be rather small, as opposed to the larger ones that we would do here at the mission, because we have the ability to have 80 or 100 people here at the mission. I think everybody knows that official residences, whether they are political or diplomatic, are often used in a way to advance our cause. Advocacy is at the heart of everything that we do, and we use the tools that are available to us to do it, whether it be a residence or a mission.

• (1315)

**Mr. George Chahal:** Thank you.

Mr. Clark, you mentioned that Governor Murphy was at one of the events you hosted. I recently noticed that Governor Murphy just signed, with the State of New Jersey and the Province of Ontario, a

memorandum of understanding. I think Premier Ford, the Conservative premier of Ontario, talked about the importance of this relationship of creating economic collaboration and jobs. I believe it's close to \$10 billion between New Jersey and Ontario.

Is some of your work to make sure that when we have strong trading between states and Canadian provinces, we create those linkages? Could you reflect a little bit more on that?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I think this is a good example.

I first met Governor Murphy within about a month of my arrival in my posting here. I went to New Jersey and had a conversation with him, and I started needling him at that point about why he hadn't done a trade and diplomatic mission to Canada. He had been to many other places.

He is a very worldly guy, very connected politically in the United States. I kept at him, and as our relationship grew and we saw more of each other, the outcome was, "All right, we're going to go to Canada, if just to get you off my back," and that happened.

In the New Jersey delegation, there were a lot of academics. We were talking about ties between Canadian universities, Canadian centres of excellence and what was happening in New Jersey, as well as the film industry. As you know, trade these days is not our selling a box of what we make to them and their selling a box of what they make to us; trade is what we make together.

Going back to the integration of the economy, the New Jersey case is a perfect example of it. We have inputs that they need for New Jersey products, and vice versa. I was delighted when the governor told me that there were memoranda of understanding, not only in Ontario but also in Quebec, where they had some terrific meetings. We know, because we're doing a lot of follow-up on this, that there's a lot of follow-up coming out of that. That's a real benefit to Canada.

**Mr. George Chahal:** As you stated, part of your role in hosting Governor Murphy and others is to help build connections for trade relations so that we can expand trade. I find it odd today that Conservative MPs are attacking your role as consul general in New York for the very good work that you and your team have done in advancing Canadian trade relationships and economic collaboration and jobs.

I saw Premier Ford stand up and say how great this partnership is going to be for Canada and for Ontario. I also saw Governor Murphy talk on BNN about the importance of Canada to the U.S.

I don't have a lot of time left, but is there anything you want to add regarding not just New Jersey and that specific relationship, but on some of the other states that have integral roles with our Canadian economy?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Clark, I have to interrupt. We've gone about a minute past our time, but perhaps you can respond in the next intervention.

We are now going to Mrs. Vignola for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Clark, the Park Avenue residence is a co-op, whereas the one on Billionaires' Row is a condo. From what the agents have told us, that is actually a marketing ploy. In both cases, there is a board of directors.

Does Canada or a member of your team sit on the board of directors of either the Park Avenue residence or the new one?

• (1320)

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I have no idea, Mrs. Vignola. It's outside my purview.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you.

You still live in the co-op on Park Avenue. When will you be moving to the new residence?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I will move when I am told it is time to do so.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Okay.

The receptions you host are still held at the residence located on Park Avenue. Is that correct?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** That's right.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Did you or any member of your team receive any emails or messages from other members of the co-op regarding the new restrictions on hosting receptions or the inconvenience it might cause the other members?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I've never received anything, but again, it's not my area of responsibility.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Okay.

Would it be possible for you to ask your team about this and send us the answer?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Yes, certainly.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you, Mr. Clark.

Have a great day.

I'll cede my time to someone else.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Vignola.

Mr. Bachrach, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Clark, if you'll humour me, I'd like to return to this question of the memo and your role or non-role in the process and parse some of the words in the original memo and the amended memo.

By my reading, there are three steps in this process. This is sort of a three-step ditty. You need to identify the need to find a new

property, so there was the process of identifying the shortcomings with the existing property and the need to replace it. That was the first step.

The second step was to select a new property. That step included, as the committee has heard, looking at a number of different properties in the neighbourhood in New York. The third step was the approval of that selection and the decision to make the purchase.

Does that seem like a fair characterization of the overall process?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** As I understand it, it does.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** To go back to the June 17 memo, the memo stated that "Both the mission, including the HOM (head of mission), and the property team in Ottawa, agreed on the need to identify a replacement property."

To me, that reads like step number one. It's identifying a need at the very start of the process.

The amendment on July 25 stated that no heads of mission were part of the "selection or approval process for the overall process or the property purchase".:

That strikes me as referring to steps two and three in that three-step process. I'm concerned that the amendments seem to be parsing these words and referring to different parts of the process to avoid mistruths. I'm not going to jump the shark, as my Conservative colleagues have, and accuse you of lying, but is it not true that this amended version on July 25 could in fact be true and that you could have also had a role in identifying the need for a new apartment?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Mr. Chair, that's a completely legitimate question, and perhaps I can clarify it.

I agree with you that there are three steps to this. The first step has to be the decision to move on, to sell the residence and to look for something else.

Let me make it abundantly clear. As I said in my opening statement, I had absolutely no role, no discussion, nothing to do with the decision to sell the old residence and move elsewhere. That takes care of step number one. I just wanted to give you that clarification.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Okay. I appreciate that. Thanks.

I'll hand it back to you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Barrett, please go ahead.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Let's say a Canadian who didn't know Prime Minister Justin Trudeau went to buy a condo on their own and let's break down those numbers. Let's say they have a 20% down payment and they get a great mortgage rate, which is tough after nine years of Justin Trudeau and the economic vandalism that he's perpetrated on Canadians. That would work out to about \$42,000 a month for your residence.

How much do you pay in rent each month for your official residence? Could you give us just the number, please?

• (1325)

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** It's \$1,800.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** That's \$1,800 on \$42,000 a month, so it's fair to say you're getting a massive subsidy worth tens of thousands of dollars for your rent every single month. Is that correct?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** No.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Okay. What's the cost and what are you paying, Mr. Clark? The difference is being paid by someone, and that someone is Canadian taxpayers, so it's being subsidized by the Government of Canada. Is that correct?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** No, it's not correct. I pay what the department asks me to pay. I have no role in negotiating that. That's in the terms of my employment.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Who pays the rest? Your answer was \$1,800, so Canadians are subsidizing you to the tune of \$40,200, I think.

It's unbelievable when you look at the context. This fall one in four Canadians is relying on food banks to feed their families. Do you think it is acceptable to Canadians that they're subsidizing your rent during a housing and homelessness crisis in our country and that you're getting a rent subsidy of more than \$40,000 per month paid for by Canadian taxpayers?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Look, I don't understand your numbers. We're returning more than \$7 million to Canadian taxpayers. That's the important number in here.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** You couldn't do that for less than \$40,000 a month in rent? Is that your contention?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I don't know where this \$40,000 comes from. Perhaps you could explain that to me.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I did, sir. I can explain it to you, but I can't understand it for you. It was very straightforward. Under the terms Canadians would have to enter into to live in the kind of place they're furnishing you with, the price would be more than \$42,000 a month just for the cost of the residence, to say nothing of the taxes and the amounts they would have to pay for utilities. You're paying only \$1,800 a month. Is there anywhere else on Billionaires' Row that you can rent for \$1,800 a month?

Let's see if that makes it easier for you to understand the difference for Canadians. Is there anywhere else? Are any of your neighbours able to pay \$1,800 a month?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** As I have said from the beginning, I'm not in real estate. I don't go around asking people what they pay in rent. I would not be very helpful to you in that regard.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I question your helpfulness on a range of things. Certainly it's not present in these responses.

Just quickly, UN Ambassador Bob Rae has an apartment in the same building as your old residence. Is Mr. Rae's apartment larger than your apartment?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I have no idea.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Did the UN ambassador previous to Mr. Rae occupy the unit that was assigned to you?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** The unit that was assigned to me at 550 Park Avenue was occupied by the previous UN ambassador.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Do you know why they were switched?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** When Ambassador Rae came here, both were available. Both are properties belonging to Global Affairs Canada.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Does his unit need major upgrades that would necessitate a move as well?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** No.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Why is that? Was it brought up? Is it your understanding that it has full accessibility per Canadian standards?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** That's my understanding, but I'm no expert on the rules of accessibility. My understanding is that the property was maintained and renovated and that it is up to code.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** That's interesting.

They made a \$9-million offer on this luxury condo. The appraisal was done on May 9, but you visited it on April 26. Why were you visiting a condo that an offer had been made on but that hadn't been appraised? How was the price arrived at? I know you're not an expert in real estate, but wouldn't you get it appraised before you made an offer?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I will tell you what I said in my opening statement: I had nothing to do with this process first, middle or last.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Clark, you're Justin Trudeau's nine-million-dollar man. Canadians don't know what extra value they're getting for this \$9 million, and frankly, your answers today do nothing to assuage the concerns of Canadians who are struggling just to feed themselves.

• (1330)

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Sorbara, welcome to OGGO. You have five minutes. Go ahead, please, sir.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Good morning to my colleagues. I hope you and your respective families are doing well.

Welcome, Consul General, to OGGO and to this committee here.

Consul General, I at one time in my life lived in New York City for a period of about seven years.



To Ms. Vignola, I thank you for sharing your thoughts on the day of September 11. I was there that day. I'm a September 11 survivor. It is etched in my memory 23 years later and it will always be a part of me. I send my prayers and thoughts to those families who no longer have those loved ones with them and those bright futures that are no longer here, whether they're from Cantor Fitzgerald or from other firms that occupied the floors.

Mr. Consul General, I want to start my comments by apologizing. I think the word "liar" has been used today by some of my honourable colleagues. I've sat on committees and I've been in Parliament for the last nine years, and when we invite witnesses—whether they are from business, academia or non-profit groups, or whether they are consuls general like you—I always become dismayed when parliamentarians use that type of language. I personally think doing that is undignified and unnecessary and does not add anything in terms of parliamentary decorum.

As a member of the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group and as someone from a riding that is very much occupied with trade and investment with the United States, I would say we have no stronger relationship than the one we have with the United States of America. Every day, \$3 billion of trade and services go back and forth over our borders. New York state has an economy larger than that of most countries in the world and would be probably in the G10, if I'm not mistaken, and obviously we need to leverage that relationship.

The sale of the initial apartment is obviously going to bring in more proceeds than the purchase of the other apartment. I know it's basic math, which may not get across to some of my colleagues, but when you sell something for more than you buy something else for, there's actually what's called a surplus, and the net proceeds are coming into the government. I applaud the government for doing that.

One of the things I do want to say to you, Consul General, is that the nexus of New York city and those relationships that exist and the two-way trade that goes back and forth between the United States and Canada are immensely important in terms of finance, business, commerce for the Canadian economy, the standard of living and jobs. If you could just touch on that, that would be great.

Thank you.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I will do it as efficiently as I can.

I just want to take one quick moment to thank Madame Vignola for her comments on September 11. I too was in New York that evening of September 11—not in the morning, but in the evening. Yesterday I attended a service of remembrance, along with members of the Toronto Police Service and the Barrie Police Service from Ontario, as well as our military attaché. It is part of the soul of New York, remembering September 11.

In terms of the importance to Canada, it cannot be overstated. New York city itself is not only the economic hub of the United States but also, in many ways, the economic hub of the world. Decisions that are taken here, directions that are taken here and opinions that are created here drive policy and drive wealth or poverty around the world. Where the opportunities are created is here in New York city. It is our job, therefore, to make sure that we seize

the opportunities, create those opportunities and accelerate those opportunities for Canada.

As I said earlier, the whole purpose of somebody like me and this magnificent trade and investment division that we have here at the consulate is to create wealth and jobs for Canadians. That's it. That is the bottom line, and it happens here. It's not to say that there aren't other areas that are important as well—there are—but in many ways, all the money in the world is in New York city.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Consul General, we know that within Parliament, our parliamentary colleagues have a wide range of views. In fact, in the official opposition, we have members there who are actually for Brexit. They're not free-traders. They don't believe in the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement. They don't believe in free trade agreements with Europe. We have seen some of those views come out in the last little while, and it's unfortunate, because we know that the Canadian economy is an open economy. We know that we prosper when we trade and create linkages. The attacks that we're seeing today on yourself and on our officials in terms of moving our relationship forward....

You mentioned the countries in Europe that have expanded their footprints in the United States. Look, we, as a country, sold our presence in London for some money, whether it was \$100 million or \$200 million at the time. If you go back to London, U.K., today, and that decision by the Harper government, that building is probably worth \$1 billion or \$1.5 billion in today's dollars. Much like the Conservatives have done here in the past in the province of Ontario with Highway 407, we see the same thing taking place with the Conservatives federally. They like to sell some Crown assets, take some money and then claim that they're good fiscal stewards, which is completely false.

• (1335)

**The Chair:** I need you to wrap up, Mr. Sorbara. You're past your time.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It was good to see everyone today. Mr. Chair, thank you for your time. I look forward to seeing everyone on Monday back in Ottawa.

Consul General, it's always a pleasure.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Sorbara.

Mr. Brock, please go ahead for five minutes.

Colleagues, we only have a couple more interventions, but I ask everyone to please watch the clocks.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Mr. Clark, I've listened very carefully to your testimony over the last approximately hour and a half. You've stated repeatedly on numerous occasions that you simply had no involvement in the real estate process. However, I'm sorry, Mr. Clark, because again, I have proof. I have more emails.

I'm referring now to an email that was sent to both you and your spouse on July 17, 2024, requesting permission to visit your official residence with the contracted appraiser. It says, "Please advise if the time works for you." Your wife responded on the same date and said, "Yes, thanks."

Then I also received a previous email indicating that the appraisers had been to your property the previous year, either in the spring or the early summer of 2023, when the events unfolded that we have asked you about. They visited your property on two occasions. You were part of that process, and your spouse was part of that process, which really puts a different spin on the position that you stated numerous times, which is that you simply had no involvement.

I want to go back to April 26, 2024, when you visited the penthouse—or the condominium, I should say; I apologize—on Billionaires' Row. Who showed you the property?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Who showed me the property? It was the real estate agent—a couple of real estate agents—and I went with a couple of people from the mission.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Okay.

I'm sure that in your lifetime, Mr. Clark, you and your spouse have purchased property, personal property.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** We have.

Mr. Chair—

**Mr. Larry Brock:** No, sir, this is my time.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** —I am prepared to talk about this, but do not bring my wife into this.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Sir, this is my time. I'm asking you the questions. Thank you. I'm merely referring to an email.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** I have a point of order, Chair.

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

Go ahead.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Whether this is a point of order or not, let's have some decorum. The consul general is here. It has nothing to do with his family, nothing at all. It's very bad.

Come on. Let's get better. We're better than that, guys.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

Continue, Mr. Brock.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Mr. Sorbara should review the material that his party has received, because clearly Mr. Clark's wife is referenced. She in fact identifies herself by her first name. I'm not making this up, Mr. Sorbara. It's in the documents.

Again, Mr. Clark, you've purchased property in the past, probably numerous times, with the assistance of real estate agents. They do their best to sell property to you and to highlight all the features of the property to you. Are you suggesting to Canadians that when you toured this Billionaires' Row condominium right in front of Central Park, they were completely muted, and you simply walked around aimlessly, looking at all the features and not asking any questions, and they did not highlight certain features to you? Is that what you want Canadians to believe, Mr. Clark—yes or no?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Oh, yes.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Wow. Wow. You have found the most inept real estate agent in the entire world. That is fascinating, Mr. Clark.

Let me ask you this, Mr. Clark: Are you a golfer? Are you a golfer, sir?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** It depends on who you ask.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Okay. Are you a swimmer?

• (1340)

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** It depends on who you ask.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Do you play pickleball?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** No. I don't even know what it is.

**Ms. Stephanie Kusie:** As a tennis player, I respect that.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** You have two 25-metre swimming lanes in your new condominium. You have a golf simulator. It's every man's dream to have that. That's right in your building. You also have padel courts.

Now, was it a requirement to you, sir, in your role as the consul general for New York, to have the world's most expensive appliances? For instance, the stove alone—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Brock, I'm sorry.

Go ahead on the point of order, please.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Mr. Brock said it's "every man's dream" to have a golf simulator. I just want to clarify on the record that it is not my dream.

**The Chair:** Okay—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** I'd prefer if he didn't misrepresent people.

**The Chair:** Colleagues, could we not descend to this? Thanks.

Go ahead, Mr. Brock.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Mr. Clark, is it a requirement of your position to have a \$19,000 oven, a \$13,000 refrigerator, a \$4,600 coffee maker and an \$11,000 freezer? Is that a requirement of your position, sir, or did you ask for that?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Nope.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Enjoy it.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Brock.

We will now go to Mr. Jowhari. Go ahead, please, for five minutes.

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

Thank you, Mr. Clark. Thank you for keeping your composure. I noticed that at times you went red, took your glasses off and kind of shook your head.

I also want to apologize on behalf of our side. We respect the work you're doing. We respect the person you are. We thank you for coming here and for answering questions. The name-calling is not something that we support. The point of view of the colleague across the aisle is not something that we share.

That being said, in your comments you talked about the fact that we should not look at trade as Canada only or as the U.S. only; we should look at trade as the North American bloc. That is, I think, the core of what we need to do, especially, as you highlighted, after COVID-19 and the restrictions around the supply chain, after the war in Ukraine and after the instability that exists in the Middle East around some of the energy sources. The more we are aligned with our neighbours and the more we think as an integrated bloc, with the ability to be able to respond within hours, as you said, is the core of this.

I want to bring another lens to it, which I think puts it into perspective. As you said, we are all, as Canadians and Americans, dealing with affordability and the cost of living. How will ensuring that this tight relationship not only continues to exist but focuses around energy, such as the zero-carbon economy as well as key critical minerals, ensure that the trading bloc becomes one and helps with the affordability and helps with the stability that we really need in this part of the world and that I can say doesn't exist anywhere else?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Yes, I completely agree with you.

Let me take you through a couple of issues on this point on which I've had extensive discussions with governors, senators and congressmen in the area of my responsibility.

The one thing that is top of mind for governors in my area is energy—not only keeping up with what they have now, but whether they will have enough energy to be part of the new economy that's coming. When we talk about the integrated relationship of the economies of Canada and the United States, this is where it really comes into play.

Take a look at, for example, semiconductors. This is a key part of the new economy. We have a semiconductor corridor between Albany, New York, and Bromont, Quebec, that is second to none in the world. We have equipment that is second to none in the world. We do packaging and research in Bromont, Quebec. That is vital to what the chip economy is going to be demanding. We're already integrated into that, and that is an industry that is hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars large. If we missed out on an opportunity to be part of that, then it would be a disaster for our country. I can happily say that we are fully engaged in that, fully engaged in being part of that supply chain and fully engaged in creating opportunities, not only for Canadian workers but for Canadian academics, inventors and the people who are going to be necessary to what we want to do.

You know, I often say that there are four elements to the new economy: land, water, talent and energy. Those are the four things that you need to be part of the new economy. Canada has all of

them. Canada has the most educated workforce in the world. We have land, we have water, and we have energy. We have to keep our eye on the ball. We have to understand how we can be part of a North American solution to what is a growing challenge for the entire world.

We're really well positioned. We have the right people. We have the right industries. All we have to do is seize the opportunities and let everybody know, especially the Americans, that we literally are their very best friends. As one person said, Americans are our best friends whether we like it or not. That was said in the 1960s. It's humorous, but it is true. There is no closer relationship in the world than Canada and the United States.

● (1345)

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Thank you for helping us seize that opportunity.

**The Chair:** Thank you, gentlemen.

Mrs. Vignola, please go ahead for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Clark, in 2006, in a different country—Peru, if I remember correctly—an official residence was built at a cost of \$16 million. It would obviously cost more if it was built today. However, in your opinion, if we'd had to build something in New York, would we have gotten away with it for \$9 million?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** In my opinion, no.

First of all, building anything in New York is almost impossible. Plus, \$9 million is not enough in New York.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Okay.

I know there are also semi-detached houses for sale in New York.

In your humble opinion, would a semi-detached have been a safe and more affordable option for an official residence?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** There are security issues. It's best not to talk about these rules in public. However, they are absolutely necessary.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Okay.

Do you have any idea why Global Affairs Canada specified a minimum of three bedrooms? Why were one or two bedrooms not enough?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** That's a very good question.

The residence model that we have for all Canadians who carry out missions in New York is designed for families. There always needs to be three bedrooms. Families with children might even need four bedrooms.

As you can see, it's hard to find something in New York with one or two bedrooms that also has a room big enough to do business in.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Okay.

I heard you talk earlier about a rent of \$1,800. In your opinion, what can be found in Montreal for \$1,800? A three and a half or a four and a half?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I have no idea how that \$1,800 was arrived at. Those are the rules of Global Affairs Canada.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Okay.

Thank you very much, Mr. Clark.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mrs. Vignola.

Mr. Bachrach, please go ahead.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Clark, you've asserted several times in this meeting that you had no role in either the sale of the old property or the purchase of the new one. I'm a little bit confused by the fact that you toured the new apartment after the offer had been made, before the deal had closed.

Was that the first time that you became aware of the sale and purchase process by Global Affairs?

• (1350)

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** As head of mission, I was aware that there was a process under way, but I was not part of that process. Nobody came in and talked to me about what they were looking at or the type of money they were talking about. The only thing I ever knew when I got toured.... I mean, I'm curious. I wanted to see what it was that they were looking at, having made the offer on it.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** That's fair enough.

What I'm trying to get at is whether you were apprised that there was a process taking place. You've answered that, yes, you were aware that there was a process. When the appraiser showed up at the old residence and your wife gave them access, it wasn't a surprise to her, and it wasn't a surprise to you to find out that this had happened.

When were you first apprised of Global Affairs' intention to sell the old property and purchase a new property?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Allow me to look at my notes.

It would have been April 12 when they put that conditional offer in.

I want to make it very clear, and you're quite right: As head of mission, I was aware that there was a process going on. I was not part of that process, but I knew it was going on. I had no idea of timing or what they were looking at or anything. The only thing I knew about the process at the end was that this was going to return \$7 million or more to Canadian taxpayers, which is why I thought it was a good idea.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** You were first apprised of this process on April 12. Did this coincide with the date the offer was made on the new property?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I believe so.

It was simply that at that point, somebody, I believe, told me that they had put an offer in on this particular property.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** That notification was made to you verbally. There's no documentation in which Global Affairs reaches out to you and says, "By the way, we've put an offer in on this property."

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** No.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.

Thanks, Mr. Bachrach.

We now have Mr. Genuis and then Mr. Bains.

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Clark, your story—which we don't believe—is that you were not involved in the purchase.

Once you saw the place, the amenities, the luxuries—you did tour it, after all—why didn't you say no? Why didn't you report back and say that it was way too much at a time when Canadians are struggling? You could have, at that point, said something to someone about this decision, and you didn't. Why did you choose not to, sir?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** When they told me that we were giving \$7 million back to Canadian taxpayers, I thought that was a pretty good deal.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Yes, but that's comparing apples to oranges. We've talked before about how absurd those numbers are.

Did they tell you those were the numbers at the time, sir?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Yes.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** They told you in April.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Listen, it could be more than \$7 million. It could be \$8 million. It could be \$12 million.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** That's quite something, since the property wasn't listed for months and months afterwards. Your testimony today is that you were told at the time, in April, the magnitude of their estimated alleged savings. We'll probably want to follow up on that claim you just made.

Sir, I have a few more questions about your background.

Minister Joly has appointed you at least twice. The first time was when she was heritage minister, and then she appointed you again when she was foreign affairs minister. She first appointed you to chair an advisory committee to recommend appointments while she was Minister of Canadian Heritage, appointments that included the CBC. Is that correct?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** That's right.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Okay. What was the period over which you held that position?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I think it was about four months.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Did you recommend the appointment of Catherine Tait?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** I recommended two candidates, and the government chose.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Was she one of them?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Yes.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** You were recommending candidates for the board of CBC as well. Did you recommend the appointment of Mr. Harley Finkelstein?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Yes.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Were any of your children employed by Mr. Finkelstein's company at the time you recommended the appointment?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Yes.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Okay. Does that seem like a problem to you?

• (1355)

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Mr. Finkelstein is one of Canada's greatest entrepreneurs.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** He might be a great guy, sir. I've never met him. The point is that members of your immediate family were employed by him. You used a position in government to recommend him for a position at the same time as members of your family were on the board, and you didn't recuse yourself from that discussion.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Our family was not on the board of Shopify.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** No, but they were employees of his company.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** They were employees, yes, but not on the board as you stated.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** You recommended him to the board while members of your family were his employees. That's on the record, and people can make their own judgments.

Sir, you were a journalist until 2017. Is that correct?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** No, I didn't recommend him to the board. Which board are you talking about?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** We're past this now, and I have limited time.

You testified that you recommended him to be on the board of CBC.

You were a journalist until 2017. Is that correct?

**The Chair:** Excuse me. We have a point of order from Mr. Sorbara.

Go ahead, please, on the point of order.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** I want to ask about relevance in terms of where Mr. Genuis is going with this. This has nothing to do with anything with regard to the residence in New York City. This is asking the consul general about past matters in his life and in past roles. This has absolutely nothing to do with the topic at hand here at this committee.

I know Mr. Genuis likes to go down these paths and become like some sort of spy detective, but let's get serious here. There's no relevance here, Garnett.

**The Chair:** Mr. Sorbara, we always allow very wide—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Can I just comment on this point of order, Chair?

**The Chair:** I think we'd like to just get to our time.

Mr. Sorbara, it's not a point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Just on the point of order, I think there are a lot of questions today about Mr. Clark's credibility and his close connections with the government. The facts are that Minister Joly appointed him twice and that he was able to recommend people with whom he had close connections when he was in one of those positions, and now he's in this new appointed position and is receiving the benefits associated with this \$9-million residence. I think these things are very much relevant to the questions of credibility that are involved.

I have a minute and a half left. Is that right?

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I'm sorry. I'm commenting on the point of order. Was this part of my time?

**The Chair:** Yes, it was.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Chair, I don't think that was clear.

Very quickly, Mr. Clark, you were a journalist until 2017. During the 2011 election campaign, a member of your family had a senior position within the Liberal national campaign. Did you disclose that at the time?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Did I disclose it to whom?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Did you disclose it to the public?

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** It was not relevant.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you for that.

I'd like to now move a motion. The motion is that Minister Joly be asked to appear before the committee before the Thanksgiving break to answer questions about actions, policies and plans related to GAC's real property portfolio in other countries and any other issues related to the committee's mandate, and further, that the committee invite Emily Nicholson to appear.

Having gotten that motion moved within the time, I will now speak to it.

**The Chair:** Let me interrupt briefly. Have you sent a copy of it to the clerk?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Yes, the clerk has it, I believe, in both official languages.

**The Chair:** We will distribute it.

Please go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you very much.

Just to put a cap on the discussion we've had so far, which leads into why I think this motion is important, Mr. Clark has talked about the benefits of public service. I would, in principle, agree about the importance of public service, but if you look at the facts here, you see that Mr. Clark has been appointed twice to important positions by Minister Joly. In the first case, he was in a position to recommend an appointment for someone whose company employed at least one member of his family. In another case, he was able to have the benefit of this purchase of a \$9-million condo on Billionaires' Row.

When he was a national journalist, a member of his immediate family was, simultaneously, a senior important member of the Liberal campaign. He's professed his non-partisanship, but we do see that a member of his immediate family had a senior role in the Liberal campaign in 2011, and that would seem to at least be something that would have been of interest to the public. These are things—benefits, opportunities—that are not normally associated with public service.

Mr. Chair, we have identified the fact that Mr. Clark received appointments from Minister Joly in different portfolios not once but twice. The government has made various claims about the purchase of this property that are highly suspect, claims about who was involved and who wasn't involved, and the buck has to stop somewhere. We think the buck has to stop with the minister, which is why we are proposing that Minister Joly appear before the committee to answer questions about this issue.

Moreover, Chair, I want to point out that Minister Joly is, of course, a prominent member of the government—

• (1400)

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I'm sorry. I think Mr. Hardie was maybe trying to do a point of order. It probably isn't one, but I'm not sure if you....

**The Chair:** Continue.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Has he thought better of it? Okay. I'll continue, Chair.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** No, I haven't. It is a point of order. I'm sorry.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. We could not hear you, Mr. Hardie.

Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** I just wanted to check on timing here. I don't know how long this committee meeting is supposed to go. I was asked to appear for two hours, and the two hours are up. Have we—

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I'm sorry to interrupt your holiday, Ken. This isn't a point of order.

**The Chair:** Gentlemen....

Continue, Mr. Hardie.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** If we've gone beyond our time, do we not need unanimous agreement to go past the stated time of adjournment?

**The Chair:** No.

**Mr. Ken Hardie:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Continue, Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you, Chair.

I was in the process of pointing this much out: Minister Joly is a prominent member of the government, and her name has come up on a number of occasions at this committee before. Right now, we're looking at these questions of property investments, the \$9-million purchase on Billionaires' Row in New York. Fairly recently, this committee was investigating the fact that an internal audit at Global Affairs revealed that one-quarter of contracts broke the rules. Imagine that: One-quarter of the contracts at Minister Joly's department broke the rules.

Having served on the foreign affairs committee, having been the vice-chair of that committee for some time before joining OGGO, I can share with members here that Minister Joly is not one of those ministers who makes herself available to parliamentary committees very often. At the foreign affairs committee, it was a major struggle to get her to appear on things. We went long periods of time without hearing from the minister.

Some ministers, ostensibly lower-profile ministers in the government, would appear fairly often to respond to studies or to address the estimates, as is the normal practice at committee. However, Minister Joly has done everything she can to avoid answering questions from parliamentarians at committees and to limit the length of those appearances. I suspect, as a result of whatever the assessments of the impact of her appearing before committee are, we'll see members of the government again reluctant to allow the invitation to be extended to Minister Joly to appear before OGGO.

She's a senior member of the government, somebody floated as a prospective future leadership candidate, but in any event, as a senior member of the government with an important portfolio, she should be ready, willing and able to answer questions from committees from time to time at both the foreign affairs committee and the government operations committee.

We have these issues about the property portfolio. We previously tried to get Minister Joly to appear on the internal audit that revealed that one-quarter of the contracts at her department were breaking rules. There are a number of issues relevant to this committee's mandate that we would benefit from being able to ask Minister Joly questions about. Somebody who is operating at that senior level should be prepared to take questions from parliamentarians. We should extend the invitation, and I hope that she will respond to that invitation.

Very briefly, I'll just add, Chair, that we did put into this motion Ms. Nicholson, who was involved in the infamous email that suggests Mr. Clark's potential role in the purchase. This clearly is a matter of dispute. He gave testimony about not being involved. I think it would be worthwhile to have Ms. Nicholson come before the committee to address what Mr. Clark has said and to help the committee shed some light on this important question.

I'll leave my comments there. Thank you, Chair.

• (1405)

**The Chair:** Thanks.

I have a speaking order of Mr. Jowhari—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Mr. Chair, can I make a point of order?

**The Chair:** Yes. Give me two seconds.

I have Mr. Jowhari and Mr. Barrett, and then I have Mr. Bachrach. Before we get to Mr. Jowhari and the point of order, I'm going to release Mr. Clark, unless anyone has an issue with that.

Mr. Clark, thank you for joining OGGO today. We appreciate your time, and we'll let you go.

**Mr. Thomas Clark:** Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bachrach, go ahead on your point of order, sir.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This point of order relates to the admissibility of the motion. The committee has considered a motion to invite Emily Nicholson to appear and carried it unanimously.

My question through you to the clerk is whether, if the current motion is defeated, that would reverse the committee's earlier decision, and whether we can essentially reconsider a decision that's been made earlier in this same meeting.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Chair, on the point of order, Mr. Bachrach's point is well taken. It would be maybe more appropriate to deem the last few words not to be part of the motion anymore, in light of the decision the committee has already made.

Now, if the committee were to support this, it would simply reaffirm a decision we've already made. I don't think that it's inadmissible. I don't think it's a big deal, but it also doesn't need to be in there.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Bachrach, for bringing that up. It is a very good point.

We can proceed with just an agreement among ourselves to delete that part because the committee has agreed to have Ms. Nicholson appear. Barring that, we can just do it through an amendment. However, I hope we can just agree to delete that final part with regard to Ms. Nicholson.

Thank you, again, for bringing that up.

I have Mr. Jowhari and then Mr. Barrett.

Go ahead, Mr. Jowhari.

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

Now we have a motion to request the minister to come. If I recall, where we are now.... Let me start by what we agreed on. We agreed to look at all the documents and to hear from all the witnesses we wanted to hear from whom we thought were directly involved. We've heard from the department. We've heard from a number of witnesses, and now we've heard from Mr. Clark. It's quite clear that neither Mr. Clark nor the minister, I believe, from what we've heard and from the documents we reviewed, had any involvement in the acquisition of the new property, as well as the disposition of the existing property.

Based on the motion that we unanimously passed that we will look at all the documents and make a decision, and given the fact that now we know that the decision to purchase was not influenced by any political interference, that the business case for it is quite clear, that the process was followed and there was no interference, and that it makes economic sense as there is value for the money, I fail to understand why we are asking a minister to show up. If our colleagues have issue with the minister not appearing in other committees, that should be dealt with in those committee. If it's in the foreign affairs committee, probably the foreign affairs committee should deal with that. Also, if there is a study that we had asked the minister to show—such as the procurement study—and the minister hasn't shown it, has decided not to show it because it just shows that it's irrelevant to the minister's involvement.... This is yet another case that we have that it's irrelevant to the role that the minister played.

Given the fact—and I summarize—of relevance, foreign affairs is not relevant to this committee, and procurement is not relevant to this study. Our understanding and agreement on the scope of this study was that we'd look at all the evidence and make a decision on whether we wanted Mr. Clark to come or the minister to come. We agreed that we wanted Mr. Clark to come. Mr. Clark came. It is quite clear he doesn't have anything to do with it. All indications are that the minister hasn't had anything to do with it as well. If you're trying to go on a witch hunt and to go back and ask how the appointment went and all of those things, that's not what I'm interested in. If that's the path that we're going on, I'll be voting against this. I don't see any reason whatsoever that we should have the minister come with regard to the acquisition and disposition of this property.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1410)

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Barrett, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I'll try to be brief, Mr. Chair.

I'll speak to some of the concerns raised by Liberal members. They're saying that the minister hasn't had anything to do with it. Well, it was the testimony of officials that the minister's chief of staff, in fact, was part of the decision-tree part of the conversation. We've heard over and over again from Liberals that they don't send political-exempt staff to committee and that they send the minister instead. If Liberal members are suggesting that the minister's chief come to appear in her place and that the committee then make a decision on whether or not the minister should come after hearing from her chief, I guess we can have that conversation, but I'm doubtful that that's the case. The minister is responsible for what happens in her department, or she ought to be.

Mr. Sorbara took issue with Mr. Genuis's asking questions about Mr. Clark's record as a government appointee. I mean, the lack of curiosity or more like the wilful blindness by folks—I'll say "opportunists"—like Mr. Sorbara doesn't do Canadians any justice.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. We're not here to degrade or go at our members.

MP Barrett, we're all representatives of our constituents. You don't need to use that type of language to disagree with other MPs.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Is this a point of order?

**A voice:** It's a standing order.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Which standing order?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Whether it's a point of order or not, you don't need to go down that path, Michael. Come on. You're better than that, I would hope. Please. Seriously.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Sorbara.

Mr. Barrett, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Well, if we're invoking first names, Francesco, your lack of curiosity or wilful blindness does absolutely nothing to serve the Canadian people. Your interruption of Mr. Genuis because you were simply upset that he was asking tough questions about someone who had been appointed by your government, sir, a corrupt government.... That appointee, Mr. Clark, did recommend for an appointment the head of the company that his children work for. That's a blatant conflict of interest. It's very relevant, when we have Mr. Clark saying things here....

Mr. Jowhari said that Mr. Clark said that he didn't have anything to do with it, and therefore we have to take his word for it. We have officials from your government who said, in writing, that in fact Mr. Clark was part of it. Who is lying, the government officials or the government appointees—or both? It's about the integrity of the appointments that your government is making, that Minister Joly is making. She appointed someone who was saying that they were an impartial broadcaster. Meanwhile, during a federal election, one of their children held a senior role with a political party in Canada, the Liberal Party in Canada. Credibility, integrity, staying clear of conflicts of interest—these things are very foreign concepts. We've seen Justin Trudeau twice found guilty of breaking ethics laws, and a cabinet of serial ethical lawbreakers. We're going to keep asking tough questions, even if you say our first names and ask us and beg us not to. This isn't about who you know, which unfortunately is how Mr. Clark got that appointment and that \$40,000-a-month rent subsidy, while Canadians are literally freezing in the dark and starving.

The minister is responsible for taking the decision. If she chose to delegate authority, she's ultimately responsible for that, but we know that her chief of staff, as we heard from the department officials, was involved in the conversations. Is the proposal to have the chief come? I don't think it is. We're past that. We want to hear from the minister.

Again, to Mr. Genuis's point, if history has been any indicator, we're going to get a full-court press from the Liberals to protect the minister from having to be accountable to Canadians. It is certainly not the responsibility of members to protect ministers. Let's get the

minister to come to committee and answer questions about this. It's an unacceptable purchase. Mr. Clark's answers today were not credible. I think some of what we heard about his failure to recuse himself from decisions that he ought to have recused himself from in the past tells quite a tale. The Liberals' strong protest of the examination of those facts is very telling.

It's important that the minister come to testify.

● (1415)

**The Chair:** Thanks.

I have Mr. Brock and then Mr. Genuis.

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

I want to take the time, because I know the media is watching and following this, as they have throughout, to make the following statement to the media. I want to spell out the timeline of events and why Minister Joly needs to testify at this committee.

Tom Clark is appointed in February 2023. He then hosts the Prime Minister at the old condo on April 27, 2023. He and Trudeau were driving around New York the next day, April 28. Global Affairs Canada said that new problems were identified with the residence in the spring and summer of 2023, right after Trudeau visits. Then steps were taken to buy Clark the \$9-million condo on Billionaires' Row.

On the documents we received that identified Tom Clark being "instrumental" and giving a "greenlight" in buying the \$9-million condo, that particular email chain was from the minister's own department. It was sent on June 17, 2024. On July 12 of that same year, the story breaks regarding the purchase of the \$9-million condo. The bogus correction saying that Tom Clark was not involved was dated July 25, the very next day after this committee ordered the documents on Clark's involvement in buying the New York condo.

This is precisely why the minister needs to testify. On the one hand, we have documents that suggest very direct involvement in the purchase of the condominium. Then we have Mr. Clark's own version today, which is highly suspect. In fact, I would say it is extremely highly suspicious.

This is precisely why Minister Joly has many questions to answer and her attendance is crucial.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.



Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you, Chair. I hope we'll get support for this motion.

I want to conclude by responding to Mr. Jowhari very specifically here. We have put forward motions before to have ministers come. We have not seen anywhere near the level of reluctance about inviting those ministers to appear. Notionally, a minister doesn't have to appear if they're invited, although we would hope that they'd respond positively to that invitation. I think there are important questions to ask about this issue as well as a number of other issues relating to the committee's mandate.

When other ministers have been mentioned as potentially people we want to have testify, there's been a much greater willingness to allow that testimony to occur. But somehow, for some reason, with Minister Joly, immediately the government members are jumping in to try to prevent this committee from issuing that invitation. It's striking, because we have a person who is so prominent in the government, who is such a core part of the Trudeau government's decision-making process, and yet it's someone who Liberal MPs don't want to see in a position where they have to answer questions from the opposition.

I think somebody who has a senior role in government, who is planning to contend for the most senior role in government, should be prepared to answer questions from MPs about the things that happen in their department. If you look at the record, at the selective approach that Liberals take, for other ministers they say, sure, they can testify, but for Minister Joly, every time this has come up on different issues at OGGO and elsewhere, government members are eager to prevent her, in particular, from being invited to testify. She has very rarely testified before parliamentary committees. She's never testified before this committee. Let's give her the chance. If the government has a good story to tell here—if they do—then let the minister tell that story.

I think it's fair to the minister and it's fair to Canadians to issue that invitation for her to be able to respond to.

Thank you.

• (1420)

**The Chair:** Thanks.

Seeing no one else, we will go to a vote on the motion.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Marc-Olivier Girard):** Mr. Chair, it is five against and five for the motion.

**The Chair:** I will vote for the motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Colleagues, the motion was to have the meeting before Thanksgiving break. If you leave it with the clerk and me, we will figure out a date.

Do you have something else, Mr. Genuis, before we break?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I have another motion to move, and the clerk has this one as well.

The motion is as follows:

That the committee report to the House its view that the government should not have purchased a 9 million dollar luxury condo on Billionaire's Row in New York, especially in light of the fact that they have not secured a buyer for the previous residence; and that the committee call on the government to begin the process of looking for more economical and less opulent alternatives for the Consul General.

I think that's a fairly straightforward motion that expresses our conclusions as Conservatives about the government's decision to purchase this \$9-million luxury condo. My hope is that a majority of the committee will agree with this motion and that this committee will take that position as well. I don't think it requires more explanation. In a way, I think the explanation has been the meetings that have taken place. However, I'll read the motion one more time. I know it's going to be distributed, but I want to make sure members have it.

I move:

That the committee report to the House its view that the government should not have purchased a 9 million dollar luxury condo on Billionaire's Row in New York, especially in light of the fact that they have not secured a buyer for the previous residence; and that the committee call on the government to begin the process of looking for more economical and less opulent alternatives for the Consul General.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

I'll start a speaking list. I see Mrs. Vignola first.

Go ahead, Mrs. Vignola.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Tabling a report before we've even studied the issue as a whole strikes me as highly unusual.

I would prefer to have time to finish reading all the data and to reread the testimony we've heard, particularly from New York-based real estate agents, before tabling any report. In my humble opinion, it would be premature and rather irresponsible to do so, regardless of issues of virtue, truth or opposition.

I prefer to do the work in its entirety before tabling a report.

• (1425)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Jowhari, go ahead, please.

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

Naturally we oppose this. I'm somewhat surprised. We just went through about 15 to 20 minutes of a conversation around why we should invite the minister, yet our Conservative colleagues had already decided to move another motion to halt the process because they've come to a conclusion. That leads me to believe that the invitation to the minister was merely a matter of a political purpose and nothing else. It was not for fact-finding.

I'm surprised. I cannot—nor do I believe the colleagues on our side will be able to—support the process. It has been clearly demonstrated that all the rules were followed, and it is supported with a net-positive future cash flow as well as savings of \$7.5 million and the potential to also make \$12 million on a \$9-million investment. I'm very much opposed to that. I don't understand why we are jumping to a conclusion and recommending to the House a decision that, until two minutes ago, we needed to have the minister come in to reach. I'm surprised but not really. That being said, our side will be voting against this motion.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Jowhari.

We have Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Just very briefly, there is no contradiction whatsoever between saying that the minister should answer questions about this important matter related to her portfolio and also saying that we have enough information now to come to the conclusion that this purchase should not have been made.

Now we're going to have a vote and a majority of the committee will have its way. If our view isn't reflective of the majority view, then so be it. However, our view is that the minister should appear to give an account for what has happened, especially when the original property hasn't been sold, and that we have enough information at this point to come to the conclusion that the purchase of this \$9-million condo on Billionaires' Row....

We have this sort of phantom math being created about the first property selling at asking price versus the actual price of the new property. Right now, we just own two consul general's residences. We're paying the carrying costs for both for as long as we hold both. I think there's no contradiction there. This committee will vote, and the public will draw their conclusions based on whether people vote in favour of or against our motion saying that making this purchase was not an appropriate decision.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

Mr. Jowhari, go ahead.

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

I'm not sure what the implication of renegeing on a commitment that has been made is, whether there is a penalty involved and how much the penalty is, etc., but I think making a decision or recommendation like that would be very premature. Our position has not changed.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

Mrs. Vignola, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** I find it very odd to want to submit a report before the study is completed. There have been veiled threats that we, as members of this committee, will be attacked on social media because we don't agree with one party or another. Enough is enough. Let's act like adults and analyze things as a whole.

I will not give in to threats, whether baseless, tacit or totally overt. I intend to do things in their entirety, conduct a complete study and make a full analysis, as any responsible person would do. This involves taxpayers' money, and our role is to study the processes.

I don't know if it's the same in New York, but in Canada, when a sale is cancelled, it raises a legal issue. Very large amounts of money need to be paid. If that's the way it is in Canada, I imagine it's the same in New York. Therefore, before preparing a report on this, let's look at the issue in its entirety and assess each of the consequences of the decisions we are going to make, as any person responsible for public funds must do. I will not change my mind, even if I get “slagged off” on social media. I'm sorry to use that kind of language.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1430)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mrs. Vignola.

I see no one else on the speaking list, so we will go to a vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 7; yeas 3)

**The Chair:** Before we adjourn, colleagues, I will mention something very quickly.

I'm sure you're all aware that our meetings are now switched to Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11 a.m. for two hours. On Thursday, September 19, we are continuing, from a motion passed June 12, with McKinsey. On Tuesday we had planned to do the Canada Post review. There's kind of a hiccup there. I will advise everyone on that later today or perhaps tomorrow. The end of our Tuesday meeting is just to clear up the issue with the motion that was not very clear and that got passed regarding indigenous procurement. We'll spend hopefully about 15 minutes just to clear up that motion.

If there's nothing else, we are adjourned. Thank you, everyone.







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