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# Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

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Chair: Mr. Kelly McCauley





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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 145 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, also known as the mighty OGGO.

We have two witnesses with us today. We'll start with five-minute statements from each of them.

We'll start with Ms. Semaganis.

I'll start with you for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis (Leader, Ghost Warrior Society):** Thank you, sir.

My name is Crystal Semaganis. I'm here on behalf of the Ghost Warrior Society against first nations, Métis and Inuit identity fraud.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry to interrupt. There is a point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Bachrach.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** I apologize for interrupting the witness.

I don't know if others are getting noise confusion through the headsets, but I couldn't hear your introduction. I think interpretation might have been speaking over the witness.

**The Chair:** Thanks. We'll start again.

Why don't you start again at the beginning, and we'll see if our interpretation system is working properly?

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** My name is Crystal Semaganis. I come to you from the N'dakimenan, which is the traditional territory of the Temagami First Nation and the Teme-Augama Anishnabai, where I live with my children.

I am the leader of the Ghost Warrior Society against first nations, Métis and Inuit identity fraud. We are a grassroots collective of volunteers made up of activists from across all sectors, whether they be arts and entertainment, academia, culture or language, virtually all facets of first nations, Métis and Inuit life. We have been meeting for over three years, because we saw a deficit in the data collected in regard to first nations, Métis and Inuit identity fraud.

For the purpose of this session, I will be saying the word "indigenous", but I specifically mean first nations, Métis and Inuit.

It is important to know that we have been gathering information for decades. I have been immersed in this issue for decades, as I see, as a sixties scoop survivor, the roles of my people supplanted by those who say they are us, but they are not us. There is one key concept that I want to impart to you today, and that is the acronym CPAIN, which stands for "corporations posing as indigenous nations". When it comes to reconciliation, we have a performative element that is consistent across the board, in all sectors across this nation, in which individuals and corporations are pretending to be indigenous and take up spaces to which they are not entitled.

CPAIN is a term that is derived from our affiliates that we work with across Turtle Island, most notably the Tribal Alliance Against Frauds, which essentially does exactly what we do but in the United States. We collaborate often, because the people whom we expose as fraudulent and who are taking up space to which they are not entitled move freely across this continent.

The issue of CPAIN is far-reaching. In our meetings—our volunteer meetings with zero resources, as we have been meeting for over three years—we have discovered that there are billions of dollars in resources that are pilfered by corporations, entities and individuals who are pretending to be indigenous when they are not, hence the term "pretendians" and "pretendianism". This is a very serious issue, and we do not wish to suggest otherwise by using the word "pretend". We use it for ease of conversation for those who must speak about this issue.

For us, the Ghost Warrior Society, one of the most horrific corporations that we have had to deal with over these last few decades has pilfered over \$163 million since 1994, posing as an indigenous nation when they are not indigenous. That is the NunatuKavut Community Council.

I implore you all to watch a two-minute video from [inuitknow.ca](http://inuitknow.ca). It clearly positions Inuit people and their view on the NunatuKavut, which has morphed from the Labrador Métis Association into the giant corporation gobbling up first nations, Métis and Inuit resources to which it is not entitled. As recently as last month, it received \$24.4 million to erect a new treaty centre in their lands.

Finally, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is the pretendians' gate to funding. They also rally on behalf of the NunatuKavut and other entities that claim to be indigenous to garner money and resources. The sole purpose of pretendianism is first nations, Métis and Inuit resource acquisition, and it must stop. There must be legal sanctions to curb the pilfering and the unregulated, unstudied theft of very limited first nations, Métis and Inuit resources.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Carignan, we'll turn it over to you, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Denis Carignan (President, PLATO Testing):** Thank you very much, and thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today.

[*Translation*]

My name is Denis Carignan, but I grew up in Saskatchewan.

[*English*]

I'll continue on in English, just because I'm more at ease in English.

I'm president and co-founder of a company called Plato. We are an IT services company that was founded in New Brunswick in 1997. It's a company that, at first, operated for a little over 20 years of its existence as a non-indigenous-owned company. I'm a first nations person from Saskatchewan, from the Pasqua First Nation.

I met the original founder of that company in 2015, and we had the idea to create a company that would seek to invest in indigenous Canadians and first nations, Inuit and Métis citizens to help them develop skills and provide employment within the technology sector. What began as a conversation in May 2015 has turned into a company that now employs over 140 first nations, Inuit and Métis citizens. It's a company that employs around 400 employees from Halifax to Victoria, British Columbia.

We have developed, over the course of our history, a training program. It's essentially a new application of an apprenticeship model and a training model that's been around for hundreds of years in skilled trades. Really, the focus is to identify indigenous Canadians who are interested in pursuing careers in technology and provide market-based learning with some accreditation through New Brunswick Community College, as well as micro-certifications that are useful in building a career in technology.

To date, we are at about \$40 million in annual revenues in terms of consulting revenues. We are a nearly 30-year-old company that became majority indigenous-owned in January 2022. Since becoming majority indigenous-owned, we have sought to find a way to be a part of federal government procurement projects. To date, almost 100% of our revenue comes from the private sector, provincial organizations or organizations across North America, with about 12% of our revenues annually coming from American-based companies.

We are an outsource company. We're able to provide employment opportunities for Canadians who either reside in cities or have developed skills and reside outside of cities. In fact, we have a handful of employees, about 10, who are at home working and generating a livelihood in their home communities. These communities

range from the Flying Dust First Nation in northwestern Saskatchewan to the Okanese First Nation in southern Saskatchewan and a handful of others across the country.

In terms of trying to become a vendor for the Government of Canada, we understood that the Government of Canada is a very sophisticated buyer. It's a buyer that prefers scale, so it is set up for organizations that are very large international consulting companies to do better on projects. We definitely understood that, but our model of developing indigenous technology professionals really involves working on projects so that we can develop the skills and expertise that folks can use to build their careers and acumen over time.

We know that we're able to actually generate employment opportunities, with the most senior of our indigenous technology resources now entering their ninth year of professional experience. They're no longer entry-level or junior-level resources; they're now intermediates and are starting to specialize in different technology areas ranging from software testing, which is our primary service offering, to other areas like business analysis or project management, which are different skills that are in demand in the technology sector across Canada and across the world.

We knew, coming into the Government of Canada, that some certifications were required, so over the course of the last two and a half years, we've certainly sought to become registered in the indigenous business directory and have sought certifications under the TBIPS process to make sure we qualify for projects of that nature. One of our offices is certified for controlled goods. We've worked through the secret-level security process. We've also become a technology partner with the likes of companies like SAP, Microsoft and Tricentis, which are industry leaders whose products are used by the Government of Canada.

Really, the goal for us is to become a company that qualifies as a vendor and, in so doing, we've learned a lot. We know that the Government of Canada is a formidable place to become a vendor, but as a company that is new—and not new, because we're almost 30 years old—we believe we have some insights and offerings we can provide that can be of help to this committee in terms of its mandate of looking at indigenous procurement across Canada.

● (1210)

With that, I'll say *hay hay* and thank you.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.

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

Go ahead, sir.

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

Thank you to both of our witnesses.

Thank you for the opportunity we have with this important meeting to discuss the issue of indigenous procurement and some of the abuses we've heard about. They were through the arrive scam scandal initially, and now we've heard more through some further investigations that have been done.

We've heard from indigenous leaders who have said there is a significant problem in this indigenous procurement space with companies that are not indigenous or are perhaps misusing the rules that allow the primary beneficiaries to be non-indigenous companies, and this is the spirit in which we're engaging in this important study.

I'll start with a question for the Ghost Warrior Society.

There are probably three distinct categories we can look at of abuse or potential abuse when it comes to indigenous procurement. One is the complete fabrication or misrepresentation by a company of indigenous identity. Another is the misuse of joint ventures. You have a joint venture officially gaining advantage of a contract that's been set aside for indigenous peoples, but in effect, virtually all of the benefit from that contract is going to the non-indigenous partner. You then have the case of contracting and subcontracting, where you have a very small shell company getting contracts and then subcontracting all the work to non-indigenous companies.

In all of these different kinds of cases, we're seeing efforts by the government to say it's checked the box in indigenous procurement, but substantively, no benefit or very limited benefit is going to indigenous people. Part of the problem we see behind this is that the government is maintaining its own list of indigenous businesses that is not consistent with lists that are put together by indigenous organizations themselves.

I want to just drill down on the indigenous procurement issue. Why do you think the federal government would maintain its own list? Why is the federal government struggling to actually define the parameters of a program that would see indigenous people being the primary beneficiaries?

• (1215)

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** Through our initial forays and research into this multi-faceted issue, the problem is that there is no unified or central body that authenticates indigenous identity or monitors these agreements once they have been set up. When you define first nations, Métis and Inuit identity, that varies from region to province and territory federally and provincially, and there is just no central body that oversees everything. There are a lot of piecemeal efforts being made across the country. For instance, there's something that's academic-specific, something that's specific to arts and culture, and something specific to economic development that adheres to procurement. That's only 5%, so when you look at non-indigenous interests, they already have 95% of the market, and for them to exploit and have considerable impact on that remaining 5% for first nations, Métis and Inuit is a travesty, for sure.

There need to be some more concrete measures and some more meaningful sanctions put into place for those who abuse the system.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** To follow up on that, I think some members of the government will say, and have said in past meetings, that identity can be really complicated, that there can be marginal or ambiguous cases and that there might be some cases on which different indigenous peoples disagree about how that identity is precisely defined. However, I think there are also many clear-cut cases we've seen of how the federal government isn't keeping track of subcontracts. It's supposed to have this rule that when there's an indigenous procurement set-aside, a certain percentage of the subcontracts are indigenous, and there's no tracking of that whatsoever. That seems not so much like responding to difficulty, but sheer negligence and disregard for the results.

What do you make of this lack of information tracking that we've seen?

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** When it comes to the issue of first nations, Métis and Inuit identity fraud, there is a lot of work to be done to displace the self-identification of indigenous identity. Self-identification is one model that has been in place for decades, since the early 1990s. It's problematic and has always been subject to failure and exploitation.

The problem with self-identification is that it relies on an honour system. As we know, there are many interests out there that are not honourable and will bend the rules, lie and misrepresent themselves in favour of economic gain. Without an authoritative body to oversee all of these facets, right from conception all the way to development, project delivery and maintenance, they will continue to be—

• (1220)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Just quickly, on that question of an authoritative body, wouldn't it be simpler for the federal government just to have engaged indigenous organizations that are working on these issues of indigenous business already, rather than try to create its own processes or lists that are separate from the people who are indigenous themselves and are already doing this work?

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** I think a systemic problem when dealing with colonial governments is that they always say that whatever is out there to define first nations, Métis, and Inuit identity must be led by first nations, Métis and Inuit, but that is not the case. We have colonial interference in all levels of government and across all sectors. Without the leadership from first nations, Métis and Inuit, there are going to be shortfalls and there's going to be exploitation continuing well into the future.

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

Mrs. Atwin, please go ahead.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for being with us today.

I have to say to our witnesses, what you say will be put into our report. There's a lot of preamble here from some of our committee members making certain assertions or assumptions, but it's what you're bringing to the table that we really appreciate for this important study.

I'd like to direct my question to the Ghost Warrior Society.

When were you approached to present at the committee today?

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** It was a couple of weeks ago.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Okay. Do you have the exact date?

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** That would have been after the Global News story of September 28, a few days in advance of September 30, the every child matters indigenous recognition day. It was the week following that. I cannot pinpoint the exact date, probably the Tuesday or Wednesday after that.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Thank you very much.

I want to direct most of my questions to Mr. Carignan, specifically, because Plato originated in New Brunswick. That's my home province. I've been able to witness first-hand some of the incredible work that's done with Plato, specifically with youth.

Could you just start us off? What are the main barriers to economic development for first nations, Inuit and Métis communities? What are those unique barriers that are faced by communities?

**Mr. Denis Carignan:** I can speak mainly to some of the barriers that exist in the technology space, because it's quite a large question. When it comes to the technology space, there's not that much awareness of the opportunities that exist in terms of pursuing a livelihood in technology in many of our communities. If we go out to our communities, we see that a lot of the youth are very comfortable with technology. They are utilizing a lot of the skills that would be useful in an employment or a career context.

In terms of having the role models to follow, there aren't very many inside of technology. If you look at where a lot of our post-secondary students entering the post-secondary system go, they tend to go where there are people they already know. We have a lot of folks who are entering programs such as social work, addictions counselling, education and nursing, where there are already people from the community who are in those roles and are succeeding. They've provided a path to follow, and they are known commodities. But when it comes to technology services, quite often the technology that comes into our communities comes in as a product you buy or a product you download from the Internet. The path for how you can actually find that career isn't as clear.

What we have found over the course of the last eight years with our own program is that we work with local indigenous training organizations, community counsellors and post-secondary institutions, that kind of thing, to try to find individuals who are interested in careers in technology. Usually, the first thing we ask is, why do you want to do this? Folks will tell us, "I've always had a computer on my desk" or "I do my own digital media programming" or "I have a little business that I offer with services for individuals." That initial desire is what we look for. We're also looking for skills that are important in our industry, such as the ability to think critically, the ability to follow logical thought patterns and the ability to com-

municate. We then take that and run them through a 20-week program. Inside of that program is basically everything you need to know to be a successful entrant to the career space as a technology tester in Canada.

The program includes technical skills training, such as things you need to know and be able to do as well. It also includes professional skills, such as how to interact as a consultant with a development team that may be situated in Lisbon, Portugal, as there may be language barriers and things like that. We do try to develop that, and then we try to remove barriers by offering a guaranteed employment offer for those who successfully complete the program. We then wrap our arms around folks using that apprenticeship model and provide ongoing coaching and mentorship support for the first couple of years.

To answer your question, what we see is that, with the people who have successfully joined our company and are working away, it becomes much easier to recruit from their communities and their families, because all of a sudden there's somebody there whom they know, and maybe they would like to do what their aunty or their uncle does. Next thing you know, we have multiple members from the same community, and sometimes we have multiple members of the same family, who take subsequent training courses.

For myself, if I look at it through a policy lens, the best way to get our youth into more STEM-related studies in university is to actually have people they know who are succeeding in those career spaces, and that will help generate a pathway for building that pipeline.

• (1225)

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Absolutely.

I have such limited time. I have about a minute left in this round.

I was going to ask about that impact and what it means. You really eloquently spoke to some of that, how even in one family, for example, some of the impacts, the ripple effects, can be seen.

To that piece where they get that employment offer at the end, can you speak specifically to how important that is?

**Mr. Denis Carignan:** The idea was really to remove barriers. Most of us got our first job because we knew somebody who knew somebody who knew somebody, and that helped get us in the door. If there are no other members of the community who are in the technology space, it's harder to do, so the idea was to remove the initial barrier.

The second one is that, through our training program, we start to develop that initial network of professional people inside the space because, quite often, we're there to solve problems. You might run into a situation where you don't know the answer. The first thing you do is reach out to somebody you know and ask, "Have you seen this before? Can we use that?"

Originally, I guess we designed that offer of employment as part of a carrot to get people to the course, but really, we think it's a way of putting our money where our mouth is, in the sense that we say we're going to offer that employment. It is an offer people are free to accept once they complete the training. They're free to accept any other offer. If they get a better deal from a different company, they're free to accept that, but our guarantee to the trainees is that we will offer them that employment. Most accept it, probably because, inside of that training cohort, there's a community that's established, and that community becomes the first professional network that exists within the same enterprise.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** That's excellent. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

We'll now go to Mrs. Vignola, please, for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Semaganis, it can't be easy to identify and report people posing as indigenous or Inuit. Your website has a long list of organizations that claim to be indigenous, Métis or Inuit. How was that list compiled?

[*English*]

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** The efforts of the Ghost Warrior Society are done in affiliation with other grassroots organizations, such as the Tribal Alliance Against Frauds in the United States, as I mentioned previously, as well as other collectives, such as the Indigenous Women's Collective, the Matriarchal Circle and all of these other grassroots collectives that study the issue of pretendianism.

Pretendianism is so prevalent in our spaces that it's creating a lot of toxic work environments for people. What's happening is that our people are suffering isolated traumas across this nation in workspaces, campuses, cultural spaces and industries in which they should be able to move freely and safely. However, this has not been the case. When it comes to pretendians, we are intent on taking back the space from people who have taken space to which they are not entitled.

Some of the most notable cases are on our website, such as Beverly Santamaria, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond and Michelle Latimer. These are harms that were imposed on our communities and drove us to action, because there's really nothing being done. There are no legal sanctions for pretendianism. There are no consequences.

One of the most notable cases was of Amira and Nadya Gill, who got close to \$200,000 in post-secondary funding allocated to Inuit students over a seven-year period, yet there were no legal consequences for them. There are no sanctions. There are no deterrents. Therefore, there is no expectation that we would have any

fairness as things stand right now. There needs to be change. There need to be legal changes made. There need to be consequences for pretending to be indigenous when you are not and for taking resources to which you are not entitled.

Thank you.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Semaganis and Mr. Carignan, my questions are for both of you. I have three and a half minutes left, so you can share that time.

The procurement strategy for indigenous businesses includes a verification process to ensure that businesses are indigenous. Have you had a chance to look at that process? In your opinion, are the verification criteria sufficient to prevent non-indigenous businesses from masquerading as indigenous businesses? If not, what criteria should be put in place to avoid this identity fraud?

[*English*]

**Mr. Denis Carignan:** Is that for me?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** You can answer first, Mr. Carignan, and then Ms. Semaganis.

**Mr. Denis Carignan:** Okay. I'm sorry, but I wasn't sure the question was addressed to me, since it was asked in French.

[*English*]

We're an IT services company, primarily, and a training company, secondarily. We rely on individual community organizations to connect us with potential trainees. One of the things we do is seek out funding to provide training for individuals, oftentimes from these organizations. They know best who their members are. They know best who the citizens of their communities are and who is legitimately entitled to the programming they offer.

That's one way we use, essentially, a proxy, because it's impossible to know everyone. It's important for us to get some local knowledge of who the people are and what their interests are. Also, it's one way for us to validate that the people who come into our program are indigenous and are who they say they are.

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** For the Ghost Warrior Society, I would concur. What is currently in place is ineffective.

We also use that proxy protocol, meaning that, when we are authenticating, we do not say to the Dene Nation, “This is not your person.” We ask the Dene Nation, “Is this your person? Is this your member? Is this your beneficiary?” We always collaborate with the nations claimed by the individual, corporation or entity in order to ask, “Is this a legitimate organization?” We are not the ones to say, “It is this person.” We work with the nations claimed.

That's a very important distinction to make. I think any solution must be led by first nations, Métis and Inuit.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Should the Government of Canada also use certified indigenous organizations to determine whether a business is indigenous or not?

[English]

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** Yes. Any indigenous—first nations, Métis or Inuit—entity, organization or corporation is operating within the parameters of not only their community and land base but also an umbrella organization, such as the Union of Ontario Indians or the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. There are always larger political bodies that must be involved in all aspects, at all levels of verification and throughout the process.

When you collaborate and engage with these umbrella government organizations—Treaty No. 9 or Treaty No. 6—you are empowering indigenous people across the board. You are validating their processes, nationhood and autonomy. It's very important that government listen to the governmental, political bodies and organizations that are already in place, especially when they say things like, “The NunatuKavut Community Council is not eligible for the amount of funding they have received over these many decades.”

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bachrach, go ahead, please.

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

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us today to answer our questions on this important issue.

I apologize if my point of order near the beginning was a bit abrupt. I wanted to make sure I could hear everything that was going on, and it was a little challenging. Forgive the interruption.

Ms. Semaganis, your last point about allowing indigenous nations to verify that individuals belong to them—as opposed to asking the individuals whom they belong to—seems very central to this question of indigenous identity. Is this at odds with the way the federal government is currently confirming indigeneity when it comes to procurement?

• (1235)

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** The problem is colonialism meeting a cultural protocol that has been present for centuries and centuries. There are many non-colonial entities that still operate within first nations, Métis and Inuit communities and spaces, such as the Ghost Warrior Society or medicine societies that exist and uphold our cultural integrity.

When it comes to procurement and engaging with those organizations, you are validating their processes. That is probably not a colonial approach, but it is a lack of colonial mindfulness about how first nations, Métis and Inuit identify ourselves outside of colonial mechanisms and frameworks. That is keenly important in furthering the economic growth of first nations, Métis and Inuit.

I hope that answers your question. If you have anything more specific, I'd be more than happy to answer.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** No, that's very helpful.

You talked about the need for a central organization or entity that could, in a proper way, verify the legitimacy of indigenous organizations. I know a number of national indigenous organizations have recently formed an indigenous procurement office.

I wonder if you're familiar with that and whether you think that kind of body could hold promise for serving the function you noted.

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** I see a great deal of potential in that kind of organization. I was involved with the Native Women's Association of Canada for last year's event in January 2023 regarding procurement, which happened in Gatineau, Quebec. This coming week, I will be speaking at the Union of National Employees' 2024 Women's Conference about first nations, Métis and Inuit identity fraud in relation to economic development in the women's movement.

It's very important that recognition and empowerment are given to these first nations, Métis and Inuit bodies, so we can tell you how we would like to be measured, seen and validated. These are our validation processes, and you must listen to them. When colonialism ignores the indigenous way of doing things, problems happen and exploitation runs rampant, unchecked. This is what motivated my journey here today: trying to make positive change in something that has run roughshod over my people's resources, spaces and autonomy.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thank you, Ms. Semaganis.

I wonder, Mr. Chair, whether I have a moment to pose a question to Mr. Carignan.

**The Chair:** Yes, you have two minutes.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Oh, fabulous.

Mr. Carignan, in the letter you sent to the committee, you highlighted your feeling that some of the verification processes pose a barrier to entry for indigenous businesses seeking to participate in procurement. Could you perhaps lay out, in a bit of detail, what those barriers are, specifically?



**Mr. Denis Carignan:** I'm not referring to whether a business is indigenous or not. What I'm referring to is the certification process, going in—the TBIPS process and the various security processes. If I have a start-up business and want to do this, each of those processes requires a fair bit of time and effort to complete. The completion of those doesn't guarantee there's actually work at the end of the day. We're able to do that, because we're an established business with a professional CFO, a professional sales team and all kinds of things. We're able to generate content. We're able to satisfy those requirements to make sure we can get those certifications.

If part of the goal is to create more indigenous suppliers, especially ones at the start-up level, it's awfully difficult for a company trying to manage cash flow and payroll to go through and do all of those extra things. If there's a way of supplementing that, as part of an indigenous procurement... Having a capacity partner be a big company supporting a smaller company to develop those skills and experience is the kind of thing that could help.

Really, when it comes to jumping through all the hoops in order to become a certified supplier, it's quite a big list of things.

• (1240)

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Is it fair to say that one of the risks, if those barriers to entry remain, is that the only indigenous businesses that will be able to access procurement will be big ones with the capacity to jump through all of those hoops?

**Mr. Denis Carignan:** That is a risk, especially in the technology space.

Again, the government is a sophisticated buyer, and scale matters. Being larger matters. Responding to an RFP process may require a 500-page presentation deck as part of it. You need to be a big company to have the resources to generate that content and provide all the experience and references. Helping smaller companies get to that stage, or working together to demonstrate that, is important.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Brock, please go ahead, sir.

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

I thank the witnesses for their attendance, those online and those in person. I know that those of you who are here in person had a very long drive, so we really appreciate the effort that you put into this.

I listened very carefully to both opening statements. I think we need to go back to how we got here. How we got here is another example of a Prime Minister who engages in corrupt practices that award billions of taxpayer dollars with no oversight. It's another scandal.

What really brought this particular scandal to light was the ArriveCAN scam. That app was supposed to cost taxpayers under \$100,000, but it mushroomed into tens of millions of dollars. According to the Auditor General, at least \$60 million went into this app, and that's only a guesstimate because the paperwork was absolutely shoddy.

Inherent in that, we find out that there is an indigenous-owned company called Dalian, owned by an individual by the name of David Yeo. He claims that the business is aboriginally owned and veteran-operated. He works in conjunction with another company, Coradix, and the two of them together are among the top recipients of contracts under the indigenous set-aside program. The company itself received close to \$8 million for its work on the ArriveCAN app. When David Yeo testified at committee, he could not identify exactly what he did. Most of the work was handled by Coradix, which has no indigenous ownership and no indigenous employees, yet the government saw fit to allow this to go unchecked, unabated.

You referenced at the beginning that you've done years of research and that you've identified billions of dollars pilfered by fake businesses. What do you say, Crystal, as a result of that statement I've just given to you, that the federal government has allowed this to continue for as long as it has without any consequences?

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** My response is that the Ghost Warrior Society does not have any favourites in terms of political parties. I think that colonialism is equally dismal across all sectors when it comes to serving the true needs and supporting the genuine growth of first nations, Métis and Inuit.

When it comes to that particular scandal, for those two entities to have absolutely no indigenous, aboriginal affiliation is indeed horrific—to the extent of \$8 million. It is indicative of a systemic exploitation that happens in relation to procurement and the government awarding monies in the name of first nations, Métis and Inuit to these companies, corporations and entities in the name of reconciliation when they are not indigenous at all.

What measures were not met? What maintenance, what reports, what failed to that extent? I also ask that for NunatuKavut, because \$8 million is small in comparison to \$163 million since 1994 for the NunatuKavut Community Council. Again, these are astronomical numbers. When I say “billions of dollars per year”, I mean per year. If you look at the last two decades, that's hundreds of billions of dollars that have been pilfered from first nations, Métis and Inuit resources—very limited resources—and that have gone off to a performance of reconciliation.

• (1245)

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I'm going to stop you right there as I have a limited amount of time.

This indigenous set-aside program is valued at over a billion dollars every year. Are there other corporations that you can identify that claim to be indigenous-led and benefiting indigenous communities but that are, in fact, just shell companies?

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** There's the Red Sky Métis Independent Nation, the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Painted Feather Woodland Métis. We have identified over 300 fraudulent Métis organizations that exist throughout Canada, primarily in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia. They are all listed on our website. They exist as corporations, such as the Red Sky Métis Independent Nation, which signs on to resource extraction agreements and then seeks to enter into resource extraction and economic development in the name of indigenous engagement. However, they're not indigenous; they are settlers.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Would you be able to provide that list to the committee? Would it be easy to extract that so you could provide it, or would it be best to just look at your website?

**Ms. Crystal Semaganis:** We do have a partial list. It has not been updated since September. As I mentioned before, we operate solely on volunteers. We have absolutely no financial resources. I have dedicated—

**The Chair:** We'll track it down. Thanks very much.

Mr. Bains, please go ahead, sir, for five minutes.

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

Thank you to both of our witnesses for joining us today for this very important study.

Mr. Chair, before I begin my round of questions, I do have a small motion to move:

That, given the chair made a unilateral decision to cancel the meeting on October 10, 2024, then called a meeting with less than the usual practice of 48 hours of notice during a constituency week without consulting other parties, the committee members request that the chair consult and obtain the consensus of the parties for calling meetings during constituency weeks and respect a minimum 48-hour notice period, while adhering, as much as possible, to the committee's usual schedule.

This should be in everybody's—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. I'm going to interrupt you, Mr. Bains.

Mr. Genuis, go ahead.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** This is clearly not on the matter at hand, Chair. I think Mr. Bains would be well within his rights to give notice of this motion and move it at the appropriate time. We have witnesses who are here.

**Mr. Parm Bains:** It's my time, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Sorry, but I'm going to interrupt both of you.

We're not in committee business. You did not put your motion on notice, and I don't believe it's an at-hand motion. If you want to read it into the record and then bring it up on Tuesday, you are welcome to.

**Mr. Parm Bains:** I would like to challenge your decision there, sir.

**The Chair:** I will have the clerk take a vote.

(Ruling of the chair overturned: nays 6; yeas 3 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (1250)

**Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I was here when the vote was being taken.

**The Chair:** It wouldn't have mattered, Mr. Coteau, but thanks. It doesn't matter. We'll record your vote, though, so don't worry.

The chair is overruled.

Continue, Mr. Bains.

**Mr. Parm Bains:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I believe the motion has been emailed in both languages to everybody's inbox.

**The Chair:** Are you speaking on the motion, Mr. Bains?

**Mr. Parm Bains:** Yes, I'll just briefly speak to it.

As you know, sir, it's very difficult for people like me from the west coast to make our way down to Ottawa when we don't have an ample amount of time to get there for some of these important studies. We've seen this on a number of occasions.

At the same time, constituency weeks for us are an opportunity to do extremely important work on several priorities that we are working on. Today especially, there were several interim housing projects that we were working on, and if I had had ample notice, I could have made adjustments to those things. It disrupted several community partners' schedules. Again, all of this work is important. I believe you can appreciate that.

If we can get to an official ruling from you on this motion with respect to what's stated in it, it would be appreciated. It would be appreciated if you could follow some of the guidelines that we are all used to and that are stated for us in the appropriate manner on how we conduct committees and committee business.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Genuis, Mr. Brock and Mr. Zuberi.

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

This is really frustrating. We've all come here to work and to hear from the witnesses. I know that Liberals have a caucus revolt to plan, I guess, but they should be willing to come to committee and ask questions of the witnesses. This is a study that we've been doing for a long time. People were aware of this study happening. This is information that we need to hear.

Frankly, the motion was just moved. It's a procedural motion completely unrelated to the testimony that we're hearing. This is a tactic from Liberal MPs who want to silence the witnesses, who are frankly calling them out. These are witnesses who are calling Liberals out for their grotesque mismanagement of a program that was supposed to benefit indigenous people. We have a witness here from the Ghost Warrior Society talking about how, under this government, there's been significant growth in non-indigenous insiders appropriating for themselves benefits that are supposed to be for indigenous people.

I want to hear this testimony. If government members have a response to try to justify or explain their failures, they should be willing to engage in dialogue with this witness. Instead, we have a procedural motion moved that's clearly out of order, that clearly could be dealt with at another time, that clearly could be discussed at a meeting next week with proper notice, and we have witnesses here. We should hear from these witnesses instead of countenancing this Liberal tactic to try to silence witnesses who have been critical of their approach.

I'm very surprised to see members of other parties supporting the government in overruling a fair ruling by the chair saying that this motion was not in order. I think we need to hear from these indigenous leaders, who have made the time to come to Ottawa to give their feedback and who are contributing constructively to our study and our work. It is really surprising to see the government, in the middle of this testimony, move this motion, which is effectively preventing these indigenous leaders from sharing their experience and is preventing us from getting to the bottom of this Liberal corruption within the indigenous procurement program, where non-indigenous, well-connected insiders have taken advantage of this program.

With that in mind, Chair, I hope that we will be able to get back to the witnesses.

I'm happy to review this motion. There may be details that we can discuss procedurally in terms of how we govern our business going forward. I think Conservatives would be very open to a reasonable discussion of this motion, but not at a time when it's clearly out of order—or overruling the chair to say that it's in order when it's not—and trying to shut down witnesses in the process.

I would now move that the committee proceed to hear from the witnesses.

• (1255)

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

That is a dilatory motion. We will take a vote. The motion is to return to hear the witness testimony.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** On a point of order, don't we have a motion here—

**The Chair:** Yes. Mr. Genuis's is a dilatory motion, so we have to—

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** It's dilatory. I understand. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Atwin.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** On a point of order, I think that you have to move to adjourn. It's not actually a dilatory motion.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** No, you don't. It's in the book.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** I'm asking the clerk. I have read it, Garnett.

**The Chair:** You can ask questions to the clerk through the chair. I've stated that it's a dilatory motion, which is why we're going to the vote, but if you want to hear the clerk reaffirm what I've just said, go ahead and reaffirm.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Yes, please.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Marc-Olivier Girard):** I can reaffirm what the chair said. Indeed, the motion that was moved by Mr. Genuis is considered a dilatory motion, which is to be put forward forthwith without amendment or debate.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Now we go to Mr. Brock.

Mr. Zuberi...?

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I just wanted to flag that I lowered my hand by mistake, but I still want to keep my place in order.

**The Chair:** Yes, I was getting to your name, and then it is Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Brock, go ahead.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I have much to say.

First, I want to deeply apologize to both of our witnesses, who are here to continue a discussion, an examination and a review of a very serious issue. As I identified, Ms. Semaganis, you travelled over five hours from northern Ontario to be here in person. My colleague, Mr. Genuis, said how disappointing this manoeuvre was. He used softer language than I intend on using. I find it disgusting. I find it disrespectful. A social justice issue such as this deserves the appropriate amount of time.

Now, to the individuals you've heard on Zoom, some of my colleagues—the Liberal colleagues from British Columbia, for instance—talk about break weeks. We all enjoy break weeks from time to time. The nice thing about being a parliamentarian and having a hybrid format such as this, where people can appear in person and appear on screen, is that you can talk and chew gum at the same time.

For instance, this morning, this meeting started at 12 noon. I was engaging with constituents this morning in my riding by telephone and by Zoom. I intend on doing the very same thing before I leave Ottawa, and when I return to my riding, I'll be doing the same thing. You don't often hear that from the Liberal colleagues because what has been happening here for the better part of two years, during which we've been examining one scandal after another, is a pattern of shutting down uncomfortable, difficult conversations.

This Prime Minister—and I know you don't want to be political, but I certainly can—has the reputation of being the only Prime Minister in the history of this country to have been found guilty not once but twice of ethical violations. Ministers in his cabinet—

• (1300)

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** I have a point of order.

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

Go ahead on your point of order.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** I would just like to call into question the relevance of what Mr. Brock is putting forward right now.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** I intend on getting there, Mr. Chair.

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

**Mr. Larry Brock:** The Prime Minister set an example of unethical governance and an unethical way of being a steward of taxpayer monies. After he was found guilty twice, various ministers in his cabinet have been found guilty. Other members of his backbench have been found guilty of ethical violations. We see a pattern that I have seen in this particular committee. I have seen it at public accounts, another parliamentary committee. I have seen it at the justice committee. I have seen it at the ethics committee.

To give a couple of examples to both witnesses, we had the Auditor General, who finally took an interest in conducting an audit of the ArriveCAN scandal. I referenced that in the first question I put to you.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** I have a point of order.

Mr. Chair, we're debating a motion about you showing respect and giving notice for meetings. This has nothing to do with what Mr. Brock is going off about right now, and I would really like your ruling on relevance.

**The Chair:** We always allow a wide latitude in the discussions. I think every one of you has been called on relevance on previous motions. I'm sure Mr. Brock will get to it.

Go ahead, Mr. Brock.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Absolutely.

To Ms. Atwin and the rest of her Liberal colleagues, I informed you at the outset that this was going to be lengthy. I will get to relevancy, but it will be on my time, Ms. Atwin, and certainly not yours or any member of your party's time.

I'll give you an example of the disrespect shown by the Liberal Party, by its members and by the NDP, which at that point was in a coalition with the Liberal government. Hypocrisy is just abundant when we're talking about the NDP because they talk a tough game in the House. They talk tough on social media about how difficult—

**The Chair:** Mr. Coteau, again, we might have an issue with your mic, so—

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Can I try it?

**The Chair:** Yes. I was going to say to try, but don't go too fast. I'll interrupt you if we're having an issue.

Go ahead, and I'll wait for a signal from our interpreters.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm new to the committee.

I just want to make sure that, if we vote on this procedural vote quickly, we can get back to the witnesses. Is that right?

We could be back to the witnesses after a vote in two minutes, if we just stop debating and deal with the motion. Is that correct?

**The Chair:** Let me see if the translation is working and everything. We're okay.

It's not really a point of order, but, yes, if they're—

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Just so the witnesses know, if we actually stop debating this procedural item and vote on it, we could actually get back to it right away.

**The Chair:** If it was withdrawn, we could get back to it right away. If it was voted on, we could get back to it right away. It's both ways, yes.

Go ahead, Mr. Brock.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** To the witnesses here, I want to give you a couple of examples of similar situations that we've just experienced, where they want to silence witnesses.

On the ArriveCAN scandal, when it first gained speed, the Auditor General was conducting an audit. She was asked to attend a committee to give us an update on the audit. It was then revealed that the RCMP had started an investigation.

I put a question to the Auditor General about when she was informed that the RCMP had started their investigation. Her response was that she read it in the newspaper just like everybody else. I expressed my deep concern and disgust that the Liberal government did not see fit to inform the Auditor General about this important fact. The moment I asked that question, my time was up, and it went to a Liberal member who moved to adjourn the committee. She literally spoke for maybe 10 minutes, and a two-hour meeting collapsed. Similarly, on other issues, the RCMP commissioner attended various committees. Again, they didn't like the line of questioning we put to the RCMP commissioner, and they moved to shut it down.

It really surprised me, at the time of this particular motion—given that one Liberal member actually asked relevant questions and gave me that impression—that all members here, including the government, including the NDP and including the Bloc, who voted in favour of ruling against the chair on this particular motion, wanted to sidestep the hearing of crucial evidence.

I assure you, ma'am, that regardless of what decision is made today, I will ensure that you're not silenced. I will ensure that the representatives of PLATO will not be silenced. I will ensure that any indigenous representative, whether they be in person or representing an organization, will never be silenced when it comes to this particular corruption and mismanagement of taxpayer funds. As I indicated to you, this is over a billion dollars every year—

• (1305)

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

Who has the point of order?

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** It's Michael Coteau, online.

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

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** If Mr. Brock wants to not silence the witnesses, why doesn't he just let us vote so that we can get back—

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

Go ahead, Mr. Brock.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Nice try, Mr. Coteau, but that's the point and that's the message I want to deliver to you: These types of procedural shenanigans ought not to happen, particularly when we're dealing with a sensitive issue such as this. I assure you that you will have an opportunity to fully participate in this committee.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

I have Mr. Zuberi, then Mr. Jowhari and then Mrs. Vignola.

Go ahead, Mr. Zuberi.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Simply, to be very brief, I think that we should reduce our interventions on this subject in the interest of actually hearing the witnesses. I find the testimony extremely interesting, and I believe that the number one domestic human rights issue is reconciliation with indigenous peoples. The testimony we're hearing today is very important.

That being said, what Mr. Bains brought forth with respect to a motion is also important in terms of how committees operate—and this committee in particular. With full respect to the committee members and to the witnesses, it makes sense that invitations be sent out with a minimal respectable delay. I think that's really what we're debating here, which is wholly pertinent to this particular meeting but also future meetings.

Therefore, I keep my intervention very brief because I want to hear from the witnesses. I hope that we can vote on this subject in short order so that we can continue this meeting, as scheduled.

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

Mr. Jowhari, go ahead, please.

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

First of all, I echo what a number of my colleagues already said. Ms. Atwin talked about the fact that we really do need the time. We have not had a subcommittee meeting to set the agenda. We trust the chair to make sure that he uses judgment.

Sending notices out with less than 48 hours resulted in the situation we are facing. Of our five full-time members, two of them cannot attend, and now we have to go back and brief them to prepare for the next meeting that we are going to have on indigenous procurement. That is neither fair to us nor to them. Also, such a short notice does not allow us to properly prepare to ask the questions that we should be asking to ensure that the government gets the feedback it should get. If this meeting were planned way before, we didn't know about it, so that is an issue—not following the guideline in the form. We've always worked very collaboratively. We had a meeting last Thursday that got cancelled with less than 20 minutes' notice and was given to another Conservative chair to run an impromptu meeting, which caused another issue.

We are here to work—there's no question about it—with all our documents. As I said many times, we scrambled and changed our schedule to make sure that we could participate in this meeting, but not everyone in the committee can do that because there are commitments. Two of our members cannot be here today. Most of us changed...and we gladly change, given the signal. We are not asking for you to cancel the meeting. We are not saying to not have a meeting during the constituency week. All we are saying is that, if you're going to have this meeting during the constituency week, give us 48 hours.

Had we had that conversation in less than two minutes, we would be back into the vote, respecting the committee, getting the 48 hours' notice, making sure that we can get all our members here, making sure that we are properly prepared and benefiting from the testimony of the two witnesses we have—and I look forward to going back to them very quickly.

I'm not sure why our Conservative colleagues, with all due respect, are filibustering rather than sticking to the point. Let's vote. Let's make sure we get 48 hours' notice, even during the constituency week. Let's make sure we can get permanent team members here and that we really give ourselves good time to prepare so we can ask the questions that are going to help us, because their recommendations are going to go into the report.

• (1310)

**The Chair:** Great.

Before we go to Mrs. Vignola....

Last Thursday, if you recall—a couple of meetings ago—Mrs. Vignola graciously agreed to move back her motion so we could hear from witnesses. Then, when we came to her motion, it got bumped by another motion. I communicated that we were going to allow committee time on Thursday for Mrs. Vignola to specifically move her motion again—the one that got bumped. I think we all felt badly that she'd played the bigger role, then ended up having her time taken from her. Again, we were going to do that on Thursday.

I found out on Thursday that Mrs. Vignola was not going to be available, so I decided to move that time for her to Tuesday, which is why we cancelled the Thursday meeting. These were extraordinary circumstances in order to allow Mrs. Vignola the right to bring in the motion that was taken from her in a previous meeting. That's why Thursday was decided on.

Mrs. Vignola, go ahead, please, with your intervention.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** I am more than surprised to hear that I wasn't here last Thursday. I don't get it, since I was on Parliament Hill all that day and until Friday, but that's a matter for another day.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Madame Vignola. To be clear, I'm not blaming you. I found out you would not be available. I had set aside time. I just wanted to make sure we had time available, because we had bumped you, if you recall, from a previous opportunity to speak on a motion you'd presented. That's why.

I'm not pointing fingers at you for that reason. It was to allow you the opportunity, as we had planned.

I'm sorry. Please continue.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Okay. It will come up again, I'm sure.

I want to hear from the witnesses. The motion was not intended to be a filibuster, a political move or a virtue signalling exercise. It was just a reminder that it would be nice to have 48 hours' notice, because all of us have busy schedules. Yes, a schedule can be reshuffled, but that can be complicated. Personally, I prefer to come to Ottawa in person, for various reasons of my own, but it really wasn't possible with exactly 24 hours and 39 minutes' notice. It's impossible for me to drive six hours, prepare, get a bit of sleep and attend the committee on such short notice.

It's simply a matter of respect for everyone, including the witnesses. This is not about opening the door to a filibuster. This is just a friendly reminder, because I reread the motion and it seems to me that it is quite cordial in tone. We don't need to play politics over this.

It is important to have the witnesses here and hear their answers. I won't stand for being told that I could not care less about them. If there's anyone who cares about first nations, it's me. I have lived among them. I ask that I be shown a modicum of respect and that no one assume what I think or don't think. That would be lovely.

Now, before I lose it, I call for a vote.

• (1315)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Is anyone else on the speaking list?

Mr. Genuis.

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

I have a few other things. This motion is obviously deeply flawed. I would be very open to a discussion of some of the issues raised by the motion at another time, but I think this motion is not

in order for a number of other reasons, one of which is that it seeks to not withstand the rules of the House.

The rules of the House prescribe a Standing Order 106(4) procedure for bringing witnesses in. This motion appears to say that you have to have unanimity of all parties before you can convene a meeting outside of the regular time slots. That is a violation of Standing Order 106(4), so it's not even within the committee's authority to prescribe that.

This was hastily drafted. Even if we're going to treat this motion with some degree of seriousness, it's flawed from a procedural standpoint. I don't think this is what this is about. I think the Liberals are hearing harsh testimony from witnesses who are calling out their own failures. The motion has to be written and presented properly if we're going to be able to actually consider it.

Chair, I'd like to ask you maybe to rule on that component of it in particular. I don't think that it's been raised yet in terms of those limitations. Maybe if the committee passes a motion that tries to not withstand the rules of the House, then it just doesn't apply or something, but this is just another issue with this.

I think we should come back to this motion. Again, there are things to discuss, but I think we can come back to it at another point in time.

Maybe, Chair, I'll wait for your feedback on that.

**The Chair:** You have a point on the 106(4). I'm not sure Mr. Bains'...or the spirit behind the motion was specifically directed at me or at 106(4)s as well. It is rather unclear in the motion. It would be nice if it were properly stated and lined out so we knew exactly what we're dealing with.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Okay. I move that we proceed to hearing from the witnesses. I won't attach a condition to that, because I know that would make it a debatable motion. Of course, we can return to it at any point. We can return to it later today. We can return to it tomorrow. We can return to it and work on some language that resolves these procedural issues, but I want to hear from the witnesses.

Let's set aside some time to establish a procedure.... If we want to establish a procedure around break weeks, let's have some off-line conversations and let's do it. Let's try to be reasonable. If members want to do that, that's great.

I move that we proceed to hearing from witnesses.

• (1320)

**The Chair:** Okay. Before we get to that dilatory vote, I'm happy to set aside time either tomorrow or Tuesday, and we'll get it straightened out. We can either do it in public or we can do it off-line in the meeting, just so we can move forward. I'll leave that up to everyone around the table.

We'll go to the vote on resuming the questioning of the witnesses.

Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Mr. Chair, just as a point of order, this vote is to adjourn debate. Is that correct? It is not to proceed to the witnesses. I don't believe proceeding to the witnesses is dilatory.

**The Chair:** No, it is. That's what we had earlier and I ruled on it. The clerk reaffirmed it as well, so we're just returning to the witnesses.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** We're back on the motion.

Mr. Genuis.

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

I am very disappointed that we're not able to proceed with a motion to get back to the witnesses. The government's position seems to be that it will refuse to allow the witnesses to testify as a way of forcing us to advance a motion that is poorly drafted and out of order and seeks to ignore the established rules of the House of Commons without any kind of dialogue whatsoever. This is, unfortunately, clearly a way for it to avoid hearing the testimony that Plato and the Ghost Warrior Society have to offer.

I've said it before and I'll say it again. We're ready to discuss some procedure around how we can approach these meetings in a way that conforms to the rules of the House, recognizing that the vast majority of parliamentary committees have government chairs and this committee has an opposition chair. Part of the reason some committees have an opposition chair is that it allows them to have a few additional tools to get to issues of government corruption.

We are trying to investigate the Liberal indigenous procurement scandal. As we have heard, there has been a flagrant disregard for what indigenous organizations are saying about indigenous identity in the course of the way the government has administered these programs.

People can go back and look at the discussions. The Liberals were extremely reluctant to have this study happen at all. They wanted to severely constrain the number of meetings we had on it. They wanted to severely limit the number of ministers who would be called. They have done everything they can to avoid us getting to the bottom of their own failures.

The Liberals used to talk about how the most important relationship they had as a government was with indigenous people. You don't hear them saying that anymore because, frankly, they've given up on delivering results. They tried to have a program that, on the face of it, looks like it's delivering opportunity for indigenous communities, but in reality, they have admitted it's not about that. According to the minister, the only purpose of the program is identifying indigeneity. As we've heard today, it can't even effectively identify indigeneity.

Liberals have been failing so profoundly when it comes to delivering results, especially in the areas of economic development and opportunities for indigenous Canadians and all Canadians. This is the context in which they have—

• (1325)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. Someone is singing online.

I'm sorry for interrupting you, Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** If we're going to be forced to have this procedural discussion, I have an amendment to put forward on the motion. In some ways I'm reluctant to do that, because I would rather not indulge this at all. I would rather just insist on the point that we should hear from the witnesses and deal with this motion in the proper way at the proper time. Instead, we're into procedural back-and-forth on a matter that is not on the agenda and is not in order, and we have witnesses sitting here who have, in some cases, travelled a long distance and for a long time to testify.

I'm sorry that we're here, but, obviously, it's not our desire to be here. We want to be talking about the substance of the indigenous procurement issues.

The other thing is that if the government's serious about working on solutions to this issue, let's work on solutions. I think this committee could actually work constructively and put forward some very good solutions to make the indigenous procurement program work as it's intended, and actually shed some light on the problems and the need for improvement. Instead, sadly, the government is choosing a different direction.

Chair, I see some other hands. Maybe I'll hold off on moving my amendment for the moment. I don't know if other members want to.... I would like us to be able to adjourn this debate and move back to where we were.

I'll conclude my comments for now by moving a motion to adjourn the debate on this. If it comes back to me, I guess I'll move an amendment. Again, I would rather just get to hearing from the witnesses. At this point, we'll see where it goes.

I move that we adjourn the debate on this.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** We'll go back to the motion.

Go ahead, Mr. Brock.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** Well, amazement again....

During my first intervention, Mr. Chair, to the witnesses, I was spending some time highlighting how deeply disappointed I was with this particular tactic and the timing of this tactic to delay hearing—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry.

Go ahead on a point of order, Mrs. Atwin.

**Mr. Larry Brock:** There's another tactic.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Mr. Chair, I don't think you provided us with a speaking list. My hand has been up for quite some time. I'm not sure where Mr. Brock was in that order.

**The Chair:** Yes, I have you, Mr. Coteau and then Mr. Genuis.

Go ahead, Mr. Brock.

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

During my initial remarks, I heard from various members, particularly from the government, that they wanted to get back to hearing from the witnesses. I heard that from at least two members. I see that Crystal is nodding her head in the affirmative, and that's what we all believed.

Let's limit the discussion. Let's get back to a vote, and let's get to hearing the witnesses. How deeply disappointed I am to hear that that was never their agenda all along.

To my point, they will take every opportunity to shut down committees when it's deeply embarrassing to them. It's yet another scandal that's of their making. They've turned a blind eye to this practice for years. Despite various organizations and many indigenous leaders from across this country warning the government about the abuses, we finally got a committee to study this abuse, and what do they want to do? They want to talk about the structure by which we hold meetings during break weeks, because that's more of a priority to them, the actual process, than examining their own failed, corrupt practices.

We now learn that the NDP, who we thought, according to Jagmeet Singh, the leader of the NDP party, had torn up the supply and confidence agreement was just playing; it was a play on Canadians. The timing was to reinforce his efforts in the by-elections in Winnipeg and the by-elections in Quebec. Clearly, we see now at this committee and we've been seeing in the House that this NDP government really holds no core identity anymore as to what it truly believes in. Its members will criticize the government and then vote blindly in favour of it.

We now have an NDP member who I thought wanted to hear from witnesses, who wanted to engage in this particular debate and who wanted to get to recommendations so that we can improve economic reconciliation across this great nation with indigenous nations and indigenous neighbours, and it's all a ploy. It's a ploy to keep this government in power to shut down these important debates. How hypocritical to hear from this NDP member. The coalition is still alive.

Again, I offer my apologies. We will get to a point where we'll continue this conversation. I don't have any hope that it's going to happen today, but I look forward to seeing you again.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

• (1330)

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

We have Mrs. Atwin, Mr. Coteau and then Mr. Genuis.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be very brief.

We could just vote on this matter, and we could get back to the witnesses. This idea that there are procedural shenanigans afoot and they're on our side is quite shocking.

My goodness, we absolutely want to hear from the witnesses. In terms of the grandstanding, it's almost laughable for me to hear the Conservatives speak in this way. I'd love to give them the opportunity to continue to speak on their expertise and knowledge and how much they support indigenous communities, because I think that it's important and that it should be a non-partisan issue.

I want to know why they're so opposed to the chair showing us respect. This is a very simple motion that we could have been able to get through as a committee. We want to be prepared. We want to be here to put our best foot forward for this important study.

Again, Mr. Brock's idea is that we have these open days on these break weeks. These are constituency weeks. We have very specific meetings scheduled with organizations and entities. I'm supposed to be at an indigenous social work conference right now, which is really important to me as well. Your disappointment is well placed, I think, with yourself.

I would really like to close this matter, get to a vote and absolutely hear from these incredible witnesses who have come forward today.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Coteau.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I agree 100% with my colleague.

I sit on two committees, and I've never seen this before, where a last-minute decision was made by the chair without consulting any of the members—outside of his colleagues—in making it.

The witnesses might take note that 90% of actual talking time is being occupied by the Conservatives. If they really want to get back to business, they just have to stop talking.

Let's deal with this motion. It's very simple. It's just saying to respect the committees and consult them when calling a meeting. It's that simple. If the Conservatives really want to get things moving....

Just stop talking. Let's vote.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Okay, Chair, I'll respond to a couple of the absurd things that were just said.

Listen to the argument Mr. Coteau is making. He says that all they're asking for is respect and proper notice. Therefore, they moved a motion with zero notice that has nothing to do with the topic. It was ruled out of order by the chair. Then they overruled the chair, because they don't understand the rules. It's clear they don't understand the rules, because they're asking what motions are as they're being moved.

You have Liberals who are being given a strategy by PMO staffers. They don't understand the procedural mechanics at all. They don't understand the rules. Then they put forward a motion, with zero notice, that would effectively gut the ability of the opposition to convene meetings.

The vast majority of parliamentary committees have a government chair. The idea that government chairs haven't convened meetings in times, places and ways they choose to, without consultation, is complete nonsense. Somehow, when opposition—

• (1335)

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Just stop talking.



**The Chair:** I'm sorry. Let me interrupt, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Coteau, if you have a point of order, please tell the chair. Please don't interrupt.

That goes for everyone in all four parties, please.

Continue, Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I have the floor now. Mr. Coteau is again demonstrating that he doesn't understand the rules. He doesn't understand how committees work.

The rules are—

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

Go ahead on your point of order, Mr. Coteau.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** On privilege, I find it very disrespectful that the member accused me of not understanding parliamentary procedure. I would have the member know that I've been elected for 20 years. I've served a—

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

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** The point of order is that the member is being very disrespectful in assuming... He basically said that I don't know what I'm doing. It's very disrespectful, Mr. Chair, and—

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** —I think you should hold him accountable and make sure that, when he's addressing or making reference... Well, I want him to apologize.

**The Chair:** Mr. Coteau, that's not a point of order, but your point is made. I understand your point. I'm not dismissing it—

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** —but it's not a point of order. Your point is made.

Mr. Genuis, go ahead, please.

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

Look, I'll say this very gently, Mr. Coteau: You just raised a point of order about your not liking something I said regarding your not knowing the rules. That point of order itself demonstrates a lack of understanding of what constitutes a point of order. I'm not—

**The Chair:** Let's return to the motion.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** I have a question of privilege, Mr. Chair.

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

Go ahead, Mr. Coteau.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** If you want to go to the next level here, we can do that. You're being very disrespectful to me as a parliamentarian. Making the assumption that I don't know what I'm doing in my job is very disrespectful. I want you to apologize, or at least withdraw the statement.

**The Chair:** Okay, Mr. Coteau. I appreciate what you're saying.

That's not a question of privilege. That's my ruling.

Mr. Genuis, the floor is yours. However, let's return to the motion, please.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I'm happy to, Chair.

Respectfully, the committee has established rules. Those rules define what a point of order is. Those rules define what a question of privilege is. When a Liberal member misuses those terms and concepts to try to interrupt someone who's speaking, it suggests a certain lack of familiarity with those rules.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** What about the lack of decency?

**The Chair:** Again, I'm sorry. I'm going to interrupt here.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** What about the lack of decency, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Mr. Coteau, please... Mr. Genuis has the floor. I'm going to ask him to return and stick with the motion.

If someone has a valid point of order, please address it with the chair. Let's not talk over each other.

Mr. Genuis, please return to the motion.

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

In the context of the motion, I find it baffling that Liberals both take offence to being called out for not following the rules of the committee and insist on not following the rules of committee at the same time.

This was a motion that was not in order. The rules for moving a motion are designed to allow members to consider matters appropriately and for committees to regulate their activities. If you have a motion that is on a substantive matter that is not related to what's currently before the committee, then you have to give 48 hours' notice. That is the proper procedure. You give 48 hours' notice for moving a motion. Those are the rules of the committee. You might like other notice requirements to apply to other things, but that's the rule book.

You can move a motion without notice if it is on the matter being discussed before the committee. Then you have Liberals, in their coalition with the NDP, who decided that they wanted to be able to move a motion that was not on notice. They wanted to be able to surprise us with it and then try to make this silly argument that somehow it's our fault for not immediately endorsing, sight unseen, this motion that we didn't receive proper notice of. That is not only unreasonable and unfair but is also a violation of the rules of committee. Both Liberals and New Democrats, acting as a coalition, have overruled the chair to move a motion at a time when they are not normally allowed to move that motion and at a time when we have witnesses sitting before us whose testimony they are disrupting. They're complaining about a lack of notice while moving a motion without notice.

On this point about constituency weeks, we all come from relatively large caucuses, some larger than others. If government members had pressing obligations, they might well have advised some of their colleagues that there was important work that was happening at the committee and ask them to substitute for them; that was always an option. We all have to prioritize between different things that are happening, but this is extremely important work. We at the government operations committee have a lot of work and a lot of studies before us, and we also have uncertain timing around various other political events, so this work needs to get done. Proceeding with that work this week, with the allowances for substitution, makes eminent sense.

The idea of this motion, more broadly, is that this is a motion that would make it virtually impossible, given this seeming requirement for unanimity among parties, to have meetings outside of those specifically defined time constraints. Having more meetings than just during the windows we have during sitting weeks is what has allowed this committee to get to the bottom of so much Liberal corruption. Having some of these extra meetings has allowed us to get to the bottom of Liberal corruption around government contracting and all these abuses we've seen of the indigenous contracting system.

All of this is possible and all of this has been enabled because this is a committee that has been prepared to go above and beyond and get its work done. It's no surprise that Liberals have not wanted and do not want that work to be able to continue, which is why they are now trying to throw on the table, in the middle of witness testimony, this surprise motion that would effectively require the unanimity of parties in order to convene during a break week. I don't think that's right. I think that's going to undermine the important work of pursuing accountability at this critical accountability committee.

This is the work that we're supposed to do as parliamentarians. I know we all have things we want to do in our constituencies, but the critical work that we're supposed to do as parliamentarians is to review and hold accountable the operations of the executive. That's especially the responsibility of the government operations committee. We need to have some flexibility to do that. This is an opposition-chaired committee for a reason, because the tools of that chairship allow the pursuit of these various scandals that we have seen inflicted by government broadly over the last nine years.

● (1340)

This is an important issue. It's a substantial policy issue. I would say let us do this work. This is an obviously flawed motion. I'm happy to talk about it. I'm happy to go into it. I'll propose that amendment if I have to, but in the meantime, we now have under 20 minutes left. Rather than go through amendments back and forth on this motion, let's give the remaining time back to the witnesses and set aside some time to continue on this motion and work out some of those details at another date soon.

If members want to have the discussion on procedure, this motion isn't it. This motion, I think, has a lot of obvious flaws in it. We can work out the procedure at another time soon, but let's give the balance of the time back to the witnesses and set aside some time to do that.

I would now move that we proceed to hearing from the witnesses.

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Atwin, I can't accept a point of order in the middle of a vote.

● (1345)

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin:** The vote, I believe, is out of order. Can you move the same dilatory motion?

**The Chair:** Yes, you can.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Resuming the speaking list, I have Mrs. Vignola and then Mr. Genuis.

[*Translation*]

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

It was a very unfortunate meeting, since we weren't able to hear from our witnesses. One of those witnesses had to travel. She has to drive five hours every week to get here. It's not a short drive, and the road to get to Ottawa from northern Ontario isn't exactly Highway 30 or Highway 40. It's more like Route 389, which I've driven way too often in my life.

That said, I'll get back to the motion and the Standing Orders. The meeting was called with exactly 24 hours and 39 minutes' notice. The notice of meeting was then amended at 3:22 p.m., less than 24 hours before the start of the meeting. However, it was not requested pursuant to Standing Order 106(4). It wasn't an emergency meeting. The meeting was being held as part of a study that was under way. Furthermore, the meeting was called for a Wednesday, which was not a regular meeting day. Our meetings are normally held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

One could ask who benefits from a filibuster. The answer might lie in the many videos that have already been posted on social media. Everyone is getting all worked up. Now, it would be lovely if we could vote on the motion as quickly as possible, because we have 13 minutes left in our meeting. It would be great to use those 13 minutes to hear from our witnesses.

When it comes to procedure, we can go all over the map. We have the binder. We also have to follow what has been done in the past. Another meeting has been called for tomorrow, again with less than 24 hours' notice. It's not a meeting requested pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), so not an emergency meeting. It is a meeting requested as part of the regular meetings of this committee, which are normally held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

I have no problem meeting during a constituency week, even if it disrupts my entire schedule and prevents me from meeting with businesses, citizens and organizations in my riding in person, face to face. Remote communication and telework are all well and good, but everyone has had enough. It does not come close to the warmth of human contact, being able to look people in the eye and sense their non-verbal language. That comes with meeting in person with the people we care about, the people who we represent and who elected us.

If possible, I call for a vote on the motion.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We have Mr. Genuis and then Mr. Bains.

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

Since we are here, I'll move an amendment that tries to make this stupid motion make a little more sense, plausibly. Again, I wish we weren't here. I wish we were hearing from the witnesses.

My amendment would strike out the words from “given the chair—

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** There is a difference between talk and action.

[*English*]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** —“given the chair made a unilateral decision to cancel the meeting on October 10, 2024, then called a meeting with less than”. After the word “the”, it would add “chair adhere to the”. It would strike out the words “the committee members” and replace them with “or”. It would strike out the words “and respect a minimum 48-hour notice period, while adhering, as much as possible, to the committee's usual schedule.”

The revised motion would read, “That the chair adhere to the usual practice of 48 hours of notice during a constituency week without consulting other parties or request that the chair consult and obtain the consensus of the parties for calling meetings during constituency weeks.”

This amendment would be consistent with Standing Order 106(4). It wouldn't seek to violate the rules of the House. It would require a 48-hour notice period or the agreement of the parties to proceed.

It would address what some have claimed to be the motivating issue here. I don't think it is the motivating issue, but it would address what some have claimed to be the motivating issue without creating a procedure that would make it entirely impossible to hold meetings outside of the narrow confines of what the House gives us during sitting weeks.

On the substance of this, we have tight constraints during sitting weeks, especially as it relates to House resources, and we've seen how this plays out. The constituency weeks provide some time and some opportunity when we're not under the same resource constraints.

I think this is a reasonable amendment. It's frustrating, because, if we had been approached in advance of this meeting, if we had set aside some committee time and if we had worked it out, we could have gone back and forth and gotten to this much earlier.

I'll put forward that amendment now. Again, I wish we were hearing from the witnesses, but the amendment is there, and we'll see how people react to it. I don't know if there's a way of bringing it home, so to speak.

• (1350)

**The Chair:** We don't have it in print, so we cannot send it out.

I'm sorry, Mr. Genuis. I need you to clarify something.

The clerk and I were looking at it, and it almost seems like it might be contradictory, what you're looking for.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I don't have it translated, because I didn't have notice that this motion was coming. If someone had told me the motion was coming or if proper notice had been given—

**The Chair:** It's not the French part.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** —I would have shared a translated motion, but as it is, while trying to follow the debate and write amendments at the same time....

**The Chair:** I can just read it back, and then we'll start a speaking list on it.

The amended motion would read, “That the chair adhere to the usual practice of 48 hours of notice during a constituency week without consulting other parties or request that the chair consult and obtain the consensus of the parties for calling meetings during constituency weeks.”

We'll start a speaking list.

Mr. Bains, your hand is up. Is that from the original motion, or is it on the amendment, or both?

**Mr. Parm Bains:** It's more a point of order.

I wanted to mention, because I feel like this is—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** It sounds like it's not a point of order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Genuis, please allow Mr. Bains to have the floor.

Go ahead, Mr. Bains.

**Mr. Parm Bains:** In order to request.... For the guests who are with us today, I understand that this motion may take us past the time, so I want to ensure that they have the opportunity to provide us, by email, with recommendations for some of the questions or any recommendations that they have regarding this study, at any time, if they don't get an opportunity to speak again today.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. We'll....

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** On the same point of order, there is no way that Mr. Bains is going to be able to relegate these witnesses to email. We will invite these witnesses back to the committee to provide a full response, to say whatever they want about what happened today and to give their views, and—

**The Chair:** I'm going to interrupt both of you, Mr. Genuis and Mr. Bains. I have the floor.

I'm sorry; I have the floor. I appreciate both of your interventions. I was going to suggest they could provide it in writing but I was also going to suggest that we will have them back if they will tolerate coming back to us.

An invitation to return will be extended to them and an invitation to provide anything in writing will be available as well.

Thank you for bringing that up, Mr. Bains. I appreciate it.

Mr. Genuis, I appreciate your point as well.

I think Mr. Genuis has the floor.

• (1355)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Chair, I moved my amendment.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm sorry. Speaking of this, we are on the amendment, then.

We were at Mr. Bains.

You had your hand up for the original motion. Did you want to speak on the amendment as well?

**Mr. Parm Bains:** No, I'll withdraw my hand.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

I'll keep your hand up for the original motion, though.

Go ahead, Mrs. Block.

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I've listened with interest and frustration at many of the interventions that have been put forward by members on the opposite side of the table to us. I would simply say that I believe that this amendment to the motion that was table-dropped here today and sidelined our conversation with the two witnesses does address the concerns that were raised in the original motion when it comes to consulting with other parties and when it comes to meeting during break week.

I fully support this amendment and would hope that the members of the Liberal Party, the Bloc and the NDP would see this as a way of continuing to stay true to the Standing Orders that we function and operate by but addressing the concern that was raised today.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Is there anyone else?

Mr. Bachrach, please.

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

I've been staying out of this conversation because I was thinking that perhaps, if I did, it would shorten the debate and bring us back to hearing from the witnesses in a more timely way.

On the amendment that Mr. Genuis has moved, I'm not sure that the language is precise enough to achieve what he thinks it's achieving. When he was characterizing the amendment, he mentioned agreement from other parties, but the word "consultation" does not imply agreement.

I think the original motion reflects the frustration that many are feeling, including two other opposition parties. We very much want to hold the government accountable, but we want to do that in a way that is predictable, effective and respectful of our time. The Conservatives have continually referred to "break weeks", and perhaps Conservatives take breaks during those weeks. However, for some of us who represent constituencies the size of Poland, constituency weeks mean spending hours and hours in the car, driving thousands of kilometres, visiting multiple communities and working for the entire week, only to get back on an airplane and spend an entire day flying back to Ottawa. The challenge with these surprise meetings—and you mentioned the frustration of a surprise motion or a surprise amendment—is that it requires us to cancel all of our other engagements with constituents and organizations that we had planned to undertake.

I share the frustration that has been voiced so far. I note that the committee for national security and public safety is having an emergency meeting on a very pressing matter, and that meeting was established under Standing Order 106(4), which provides for consultation with the other parties. It doesn't require unanimity. It requires that a certain number of members of the committee consent to the meeting being held, and it compels the chair to schedule that meeting accordingly.

I don't see any reason why we can't have an agreement among us as members of this committee to not hold meetings during constituency weeks unless the conditions of Standing Order 106(4) are met. I think that would be a very reasonable compromise that would allow the opposition parties to effectively hold this government to account, to hear from witnesses on time-sensitive and important emerging matters, and to conduct the work of the committee in the best possible way while also respecting the schedules of the members of the committee, some of whom represent ridings on the other side of the country.

I can't support the amendment, because I don't believe that the wording reflects the intent of the mover, and I don't believe that it significantly strengthens the procedure from where we are now. I would support an amendment that gets us back to the place where we don't hold meetings during constituency weeks unless a certain number of members of the committee agree that such a meeting is warranted.

Thank you.

• (1400)

**The Chair:** Mr. Bachrach, we are out of resources, so I'm afraid I will be adjourning. Maybe you can put your proposed amendment in writing and have it ready for when this debate resumes.

We are adjourned.







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