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# **Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri- Food**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, March 22, 2011**

**Chair**

**Mr. Larry Miller**



## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Tuesday, March 22, 2011

• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC)):** Order, please.

Guys, I have a heck of a cold and my hearing is bad enough. If we have a whole bunch of conversations going on, I'm going to have trouble and I'm not going to be in a very good mood, so I might as well just be clear.

Mr. Lemieux, I have you on the list for debate on the motion.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Chair, sorry, I want to start with a point of order. The point of order has to do with the schedule for today. I must admit, when I received the schedule a week and a bit ago, I was very concerned to see that the committee business had actually been constrained to resuming debate on the motion by the Honourable Wayne Easter, moved on March 10, 2011. The reason I say this is because having been on committees for five years, I have never seen that type of constraint placed upon committee business right at the start of a meeting.

What I have seen in the past is debate on motions during a particular meeting, and when that meeting comes to an end, if there was no vote called, if the debate just ended because the meeting had to be adjourned, because it was the end of the meeting, we all went our ways and when we came back we started with a new schedule. The new schedule might list committee business, but it did not force or constrain the committee to go back to the business that was being discussed at the previous meeting. Every meeting is a new meeting. So this is somewhat alarming to me.

I'd like to know where this came from. Where did this exact wording come from, "resuming debate on the motion"? Did it come from you? Did it come from the clerk?

The other thing I'd like to state is that we're in the middle of a study, Chair—

**The Chair:** Can I answer your first question?

I was not aware this was going out. It did go out from the clerk. After the fact, basically, I could have asked them to recall it—

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Yes.

• (1110)

**The Chair:** —but under the circumstances.... To put it in simple terms, something everybody can understand, I'd have been between a rock and a hard place no matter what I had done.

Regarding the agenda, whether we agreed or not, the clerk and I did discuss this. I think any time an agenda goes out we will discuss it again beforehand. But ultimately, I made the decision that once it's out there, it's there; everybody has seen it. All it would have caused is more debate, which I guess is happening right now.

But no, I did not authorize it to go out, ultimately, and I think I've explained that to you.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Let me continue, then, on this same point of order. What concerns me, Chair, is that all the rules and procedures we're following with respect to this particular motion seem to be exceptional and extraordinary. We spent some time in the last committee meeting explaining that normally, in order to move a motion that's last on the list up the list...we don't normally do that. Normally you need unanimous consent to do it.

Why is that? It's because it's usually first come, first served on motions. There was a list of 10 or 12 or 13 motions that were sitting in front of Mr. Easter's. We have a well-established procedure and protocol on how to deal with motions. I've been on this specific committee for two years, and we have a way of handling this. My understanding is that it was also the way in which this committee operated previously, before I became part of this committee. Yet this motion is special for some reason.

**The Chair:** Can I speak to that?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Well, I'd like to finish.

Okay, you can speak to it.

**The Chair:** On that you are right. The practice of this committee has been to deal with motions in order. From time to time, as we went through the order I would do that. I would ask each motion, and at various times most, if not all, members of the committee have said, "No, Mr. Chairman, I'm not going to deal with that one today", but we always did it in that order. You are correct.

Where my problem was when I had to rule that the motion was eligible is that basically this committee was acting in good faith with that practice. I did not have it in writing; therefore, I had to make the decision that I did.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Chair, I'm not blaming you.

**The Chair:** No, I know you're not.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** What I'm saying is that the manner in which this committee—which includes you, it's all of us—is dealing with this particular motion is extraordinary and it runs against the very procedures and protocols that we've set up within this committee. I'm referencing us back to our last meeting. You're right, Chair. When we normally have 10 or 15 motions, you run through each and every motion, and on number one, the top motion on the paper, you ask if that person is ready to move that motion. In the past, you're quite right, we've had people say, "Not today. I'm going to leave it there." They have a choice of either withdrawing it, leaving it there untouched, or moving the motion, and oftentimes some people have said, "I'm going to leave it there. I do not want to move on the debate." And that's fine. It stays there for the next time we come back to motions.

We went through some of the people who actually had motions in front of Mr. Easter's. Mr. Hoback is a great example. Mr. Hoback expressed a strong objection to being jumped by Mr. Easter. It didn't matter.

Chair, let me finish. This is important because—

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm going to let you finish, Mr. Lemieux, but I'm just putting it out there that we had this debate, and I don't think there's much productivity in rehashing the same thing we did before we got to the motion.

I am going to ask you to be brief, and we'll move it.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Chair, you are constraining me again.

**The Chair:** No, I'm not.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Then don't make the comment.

The next point...and this was under the chair's direction. Mr. Richards had a motion that sat in front of Mr. Easter's, and Mr. Richards wasn't even allowed to speak about it.

This is exceptional and extraordinary that an MP who has a motion sitting in front of another MP's motion is not allowed to speak as to what the impact might be or what his feelings are on his motion being jumped by another MP's motion. I call that exceptional, extraordinary. I call it unfortunate.

Then the committee—I'll call it the opposition members—banded together and forced their will, and we ended up debating Mr. Easter's motion despite the bad will it sowed among committee members. They forced the hand of the committee, Chair. They forced your hand on top of it, and we ended up debating this at the last meeting. It did not come to a vote because we were not done expressing ourselves, and now we find another extraordinary measure, Chair.

The wording of the agenda is exceptional, extraordinary, and, I'll say it again, it's unfortunate, and you, yourself, have admitted it's unfortunate. The question I have is this. What is it with this particular motion that all rules, regulations, agreement, procedures, and protocols are thrown out the window and trampled underfoot for this particular motion? We might say, "Well, it only happened the once. We'll make sure it doesn't happen again."

Chair, the reason I'm explaining what happened at the beginning of the last meeting right through to where we are today is to show you that this is not isolated. This is not just one instance of this happening; this is the third thing that has happened with respect to

this motion, and quite frankly, I completely disagree with the way in which this meeting is being conducted.

We are supposed to be studying biotechnology. That was on the agenda until it got rewritten by the clerk into what it is today. We should be having witnesses today. Surely farmers are more important than Mr. Easter. Isn't that why we have farmers come in front of the committee? Isn't that why we have farm groups come in front of the committee? To share their expertise?

I can talk to Mr. Easter any time, and so can other committee members.

● (1115)

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemieux, you have the option, anybody on the committee has the option, of moving a motion to go to other business. The agenda is out. I've explained what happened. I don't believe that will happen again, but it's happened. As I said, if you or anybody else wants to move a motion to move to another item of business right now, that's completely allowable.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Okay. I'll move a motion that we move to other committee business.

**The Chair:** Any specific...?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Chair, we should have witnesses here today. This is what this committee is about. This is what we're studying right now. We're studying the biotechnology sector, and our aim is to produce a report that we will submit to Parliament. We do very good work, in general, when we work together cooperatively on these types of studies.

**The Chair:** So the answer is nothing specific. Is it just other business?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** No, no. There you go again. Would you let me finish?

I'm telling you—

**The Chair:** I'm asking you to detail your motion, Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Yes, so let me finish.

What I'm saying is that we should have witnesses here today and we don't.

**The Chair:** But we don't.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** So where I'm going with this, Chair, is we should discuss motions because we don't have witnesses here, but we should start at the top of the list of motions and work our way through them in the manner in which we normally do. That's my motion: that we go back to committee business, we go to motions, but that we go to motions in the order in which they were received. That's the way this committee operates. It's the way this committee has operated. It's the way this committee should operate. That protocol was put in place in good faith. There was unanimous consent when we established this at our very first meeting of the agriculture committee. We should not be breaching that and we should not be carrying old business forward like this.

I move that we stay on committee business and that we move to motions in the order in which the motions were brought in front of this committee, out of respect for the members who put those motions in front of committee.

**The Chair:** There is no debate on this. I'm going to call the question.

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Why is there no debate?

**The Chair:** Because there isn't under the rules.

Do you want me to read it to you?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Order, please.

It reads, "If a dilatory motion is accompanied by a condition, it becomes a substantive motion." It also says, "Dilatory motions do not require notice, nor can they be amended or debated. They are therefore put to a vote immediately." That is on page 1057. I think that's all you need to know.

I'm going to call the question.

All those in favour of Mr. Lemieux's motion?

Those opposed?

(Motion negatived)

**The Chair:** We are back to debate on Mr. Easter's motion, and I have you on the speakers list.

Sorry?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I'm on that list?

**The Chair:** Yes, but I had Mr. Lemieux first on the list, Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Okay.

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** I would like to raise a point of order.

I am concerned with the way the motions were dealt with in the last meeting. I reviewed it and I believe this goes to parliamentary privilege. As a member of Parliament, I have a right to put a motion forward as long as I respect due diligence, due process, 48 hours, everything else. Some of my colleagues have already gone through that process, and what we've experienced here is the tyranny of the majority. The opposition bands together and decides that my motion, anybody else's motion, doesn't matter. Only their motions matter.

I would like to know that if I put a motion forward, it's not going to get skipped over because another member of Parliament decides that his motion is more important. Frankly, I believe this goes to privilege, and I believe it is something you need to take under consideration. I'm not asking you to change a ruling you've already made, but in the future we need to have something in writing on this, because this is not an acceptable process.

We still have all these motions sitting in front of the committee. Who knows if we're ever going to get to some of the motions? Clearly, some of Mr. Easter's motions were political at the time. He had his press releases out. If he could just take them off the committee table now, we could at least move our motions forward, rather than have his motions sit there and then jump ahead of us when he has an issue of the day. I believe this is a real concern. I'm not asking you to address it now, but I'm asking you to take this under consideration and come back with some amendments, whether

in writing or not, that will allow this committee to move forward in a structured process that respects the privilege of all members.

Thank you.

• (1120)

**The Chair:** Mr. Storseth, I agree with you. God only knows, it would make my job much easier if we had this in writing. It's been on the honour system and has worked well up until now.

Back to you, Mr. Lemieux.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

There have been a fair number of things said here. I believe the way this motion came forward was in accordance with the rules, with parliamentary procedure. I believe the clerk said that at the last meeting. It is interesting that the government members are playing these games here again today. I would suggest that we get to the motion and debate it. It is under the rules. When an urgent matter comes up, a member of Parliament—

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Order.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** This is an urgent matter, and when urgent matters come up, it is within a member's rights in this Parliament to move that motion forward and bring it on the agenda.

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter, I believe I ruled that way at the last meeting.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** That's what happened here. I want to put that on the record, because we've had a lot of malarkey from the other side.

Thank you. Let's get to the motion.

**The Chair:** Is there debate?

Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Thank you, Chair.

Actually, I would like to bring up perhaps a follow-up on a few of the points just made by Mr. Easter, because I think this strikes at the essence of this motion. What is the urgency? This is a question that we asked before. Is it important? Yes. It's important. Every MP sitting around this table realizes that this type of issue, this particular issue, is important. But we don't understand the urgency and why, as I was mentioning during my point of order, everything has to be cast aside, or why special rules seem to be in effect for this particular motion.

The reason I put it in that framework is that we as a committee are studying biotechnology. It's a comprehensive study. We've had witnesses come in front of committee. We've had the committee travel to actually speak to the agricultural sector, and speak to the research and development sector, to have a better understanding of biotechnology, of how biotechnology is affecting and impacting the agricultural sector, of the advantages and disadvantages.

We've been conducting this study and we're not done. There are more witnesses who should be coming in front of the committee. We know there are more witnesses who should be coming in front of committee, and for some reason we're not getting around to it.

One would say, oh, this is more urgent than the study. But the point I'm making, Chair, is that this is part of the study. This motion that we see here is part of the study. We should be including it as part of the study, not breaking it out.

Why don't we all break out our pet motions from the study? Instead of having a study and having a final report, we could have 15 individual, fragmented pet motions—

**An hon. member:** You win some, you lose some.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** —that serve the MP himself rather than the greater good of the agricultural sector and the greater good of the committee.

I think that's what is rankling here, Chair. This particular motion is on the table in front of committee not because it's in the best interests of the committee. Certainly it's clearly the case that this is not in the best interests of the committee when you see the seeds of unhappiness and discontent that Mr. Easter has managed to sow in such a short amount of time, when we spent years building up goodwill on the committee. It's not in the best interests of the agricultural sector. Yes, there are some who would like to see a motion like this pass immediately. We've heard from them. But there are some who would not.

My point is that we're not done with this study. How can we possibly move ahead on a particular motion that's worded so strongly? It prejudices the study and it prejudices the report.

If it's not in the best interest of the committee, it's not in the best interest of farmers, or it's not in the best interest of our biotechnology sector and our biotechnology study, whose interest is it in? It's in Mr. Easter's best interest. It doesn't go much wider than that.

I'm going to explain why I do think it is in Mr. Easter's best interest. Mr. Easter has basically been painted into a corner. I'd like to point out that when Mr. Easter was the parliamentary secretary for agriculture under the previous Liberal government, they were the ones who approved the plots of Roundup Ready alfalfa. It's his government that would have done that. He would have been the parliamentary secretary at the time.

It is somewhat hypocritical to now, all of a sudden, be taking such a strong stand against what he supported when he actually was in government and when he was the parliamentary secretary. I find that a bit baffling.

Then we had Mr. Atamanenko's bill come forward. Mr. Atamanenko's bill was fully debated in the House. It was debated here in committee. It was studied here in committee as well. As you remember, Chair, we had witnesses come forward to look at Mr. Atamanenko's bill in great detail.

Mr. Easter's line of action regarding Mr. Atamanenko's bill was to support Mr. Atamanenko's bill, which effectively would have had a very detrimental impact on the research and development field of agriculture and would have hurt the biotechnology sector of agriculture.

Mr. Easter voted in favour of Mr. Atamanenko's bill every step of the way—at second reading, at third reading, at committee.

In fact, Mr. Atamanenko ran out of time at committee, if we remember well. He asked for an extension, which—

● (1125)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Perhaps the parliamentary secretary could at least get his facts right. I believe I did support it during the debate.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Don't constrain me.

**An hon. member:** You said third reading.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I didn't support it at every step of the way.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** I'm not done. I am not done.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** The Conservative members in this committee played games—as they're doing right now—that prevented us from hearing from some pretty legitimate witnesses, including the Canadian Wheat Board.

**The Chair:** You're past the point of order now, Mr. Easter.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wasn't done.

You're right that I said third reading and what I should have said was report stage. And I would have said—

**The Chair:** Keep your debate to the motion.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** I am on the motion, Chair. I'm actually talking about why it is that Mr. Easter has put forward his motion and why it is that his motion is disrupting committee. Who does this serve best? This is all about his motion, Chair. And what I'm saying is that Mr.—

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** On a point of order, Mr. Atamanenko.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** Mr. Chair, I think what we're seeing are personal attacks. I'm not sure if that fits with the motion we're discussing. We're discussing a motion to try to do something for people who might be hit by genetically modified alfalfa. I'm not sure if it's appropriate to personally attack Mr. Easter. I think Mr. Lemieux should save that for the election campaign.

**The Chair:** Point taken.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Chair, if I may, I'm surprised you took the point, because there has not been a single personal attack in there. I'm simply stating fact. If I said Mr. Easter was dishonest or if I said he was a thief, that's a personal attack. For me to say he voted in favour of Mr. Atamanenko's bill at second reading and voted in favour of Mr. Atamanenko's bill at report stage is not a personal attack; that's a statement of fact. The way in which this particular motion was forced upon committee is a statement of fact. I haven't called Mr. Easter a name, so it's not a personal attack. I don't know why the point was taken on that.

**The Chair:** You're taking it the wrong way. All I am—

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** I'm listening to what you say, Chair.

**The Chair:** If I thought you were making personal attacks, I would have ruled so. I didn't, so carry on.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr. Easter finds himself in a tough spot. The tough spot he finds himself in is that he supported Mr. Atamanenko's bill at all of its stages. Mr. Atamanenko's bill ran out of time. Forget the fact that I can't remember the number of months it sat in front of Parliament. It still wasn't enough time for Mr. Atamanenko. It's because he saw the end coming that he passed a motion for an extension.

Mr. Chair, a motion came forward before that. Witnesses came in front of this committee to say that the prolonged debate or simply the lengthy debate on Mr. Atamanenko's motion or bill was actually having a detrimental impact on the research and development sector of agriculture. They talked about investors, companies that would normally invest in biotechnology and in research and development in Canada. We have a fairly robust research and development sector. They came in front of the committee to say that with Mr. Atamanenko's bill in front of the House, it was sowing uncertainty in the field. It was actually giving investors pause. They were withholding decisions in favour of our research and development sector.

They were coming to see me. If they were coming to see me and my colleagues on the committee, I'm certain they were going to see Mr. Easter and Mr. Valeriotte. In fact, we had many discussions on who was coming to see us, despite the breakdown in relations at committee. We had better relations at that time and we were communicating as we should, being members of the agriculture committee. I know they went to see Mr. Easter and Mr. Valeriotte to explain the concern they had that Mr. Atamanenko's bill on GM was hurting the sector.

What did Mr. Easter do? Despite all of that, he voted in favour of this committee reporting back to the House to ask for an extension to Mr. Atamanenko's bill. When it got to the House, we had debate on whether it should be extended or should not be extended. Mr. Easter again voted for the extension, not only in committee but in the House, and that Parliament should give more time to Mr. Atamanenko's bill. It's all on the public record. Mr. Valeriotte voted that way as well.

Mr. Easter was basically sending a message to people who would support the position that he's with Mr. Atamanenko a hundred percent. He was a hundred percent on board with the contents of Mr. Atamanenko's bill, every step of the way, vote after vote and debate after debate. Everything that Mr. Easter did in terms of action would lead the people who supported Mr. Atamanenko's bill to believe that Mr. Easter fully supported the bill. Then came the final vote in the House on Mr. Atamanenko's bill, and Mr. Easter voted against Mr. Atamanenko's bill.

Did he vote the right way in the end? Yes, he voted the right way in the end. I think the companies that were involved in research and development in the biotechnology sector in Canada were appreciative that Mr. Easter had finally, at the very end, voted against Mr. Atamanenko's bill.

Chair, you can imagine the surprise of the people, groups, and organizations that followed Mr. Easter's every move from the beginning of Mr. Atamanenko's bill. He voted for it, supported it, debated for it, and argued in favour of it. At the very last minute, at the last vote when the bill could actually pass into law, Mr. Easter

then voted against it. He changed his colours. It was a 180-degree turn. You can imagine the shock.

What did they do? They got on to Mr. Easter. They started lobbying him, phoning him, peppering him with e-mails, and bringing tremendous pressure to bear. They may very well have mentioned that he was the president of the NFU for many years and that, as an organization, the NFU supported Mr. Atamanenko's bill.

• (1130)

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I understand that we shouldn't have personal attacks here, but Mr. Lemieux referred to Mr. Easter as president of the NFU. That is a type of personal attack.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** It's just a statement of fact. I'm showing the predicament that Mr. Easter finds himself in. The NFU, perhaps supporters of the NFU, and certainly some of the witnesses we had in front of committee or their supporters would have been in favour of Mr. Atamanenko's bill. They would have fully supported Mr. Easter right up until the moment when he cast the deciding vote against Mr. Atamanenko's bill and it failed to pass in the House of Commons.

Mr. Easter has been under tremendous pressure from all of these groups and organizations that were in his camp, so to speak. They've probably been thumping him and asking what he was thinking, why he sold out on them, and why he threw in the towel. What kind of pressure could have been brought to bear to be such a turncoat to what they wanted him to do?

Now Mr. Easter has to make it up. Somehow he has to come up with a way to appease them and say "No, wait. You don't understand. I was always for you and your interests."

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Are we going to get into debating this? You can say what you like about me and it isn't going to bother me a bit. I take positions on what's the right thing for society. I always have, even when it was against my own government, and I'm not going to stop doing that.

Mr. Chair, my point of order is that they can talk like this all day if they like, but the fact of the matter is we have a motion on the table. It would be nice to actually debate the motion and the merits around it, have a vote on it, and get on with parliamentary business.

• (1135)

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

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Thank you.

Chair, as you know, that's not a point of order.

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Your leader said you win some and you lose some.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** This is talking about the motion. I brought up a question right at the beginning of this meeting and at the beginning of the last meeting. Why is this motion so special, and why is it of an urgent nature? That's what I began with.

**The Chair:** We had that debate prior to the debate on the motion.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** No, Chair, we did not have that debate.

**The Chair:** Yes, we did.

Let's debate the motion.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** I am debating the motion. That's my point. In debating the motion, I'm trying to establish why this might be so urgent, and I'm getting to the best part, Chair.

The best part is that Mr. Easter was wildly inconsistent in his support of Mr. Atamanenko's bill. He let down his supporters. They're probably being very vocal with him now and he's trying to make it up to them. The problem is he's doing it on committee time. Rather than just having a group hug with them and telling them that he is still working for them, he is using up committee time. He has blocked and obstructed progress on our study. As a result, he is blocking and obstructing this committee's ability to finish its report and submit it to the House of Commons. This is not a one-day interruption anymore; this is a two-day interruption, which is quite extraordinary for any one motion.

Why is he doing it? He's doing it to appease those people he angered by not voting for Mr. Atamanenko's bill. He's doing a little personal relations exercise here. What irks me, Chair, is he's doing it on the committee's time. We all have to suffer through this, committee staff included, because Mr. Easter has to make it up to those people who didn't appreciate his voting against Mr. Atamanenko's bill.

I think it's inappropriate that he do this. I think it's inappropriate that he strong-arm a motion like this, which is actually part of the study we are conducting right now. I think it's inappropriate that he strong-arm the committee to get his way, to harness forcefully the committee's resources into voting on his pet motion because he has to build bridges, because he has to make it up to people who were somehow disenchanted with the wildly contradictory position he took on Mr. Atamanenko's bill.

I'm both surprised and not surprised that he has the full support of opposition members. I'm not surprised because every time something like this comes up in committee, whenever a difficult subject or motion comes in front of committee, the MPs from the other parties could care less about the work of the committee; they just bond together. As you saw today, we were outvoted six to five every single time. We don't stand a chance in these votes. We know that, Chair.

In one sense, it is a rule of the majority, and we are certainly not the majority here on committee. We never have been the majority on committee. I'm not surprised that they bind themselves to him, in a matter such as this, but I am surprised, Chair, that they're not able to step back for a moment to see what's going on, to see what's behind this motion. I'm actually surprised that none of the other committee members seems to be the least bit concerned with the way in which this motion was handled, with the way in which this motion was brought in front of committee, and in the breakdown in committee relations.

As parliamentary secretary, Chair, I've been on radio. I have done press interviews. I have spoken with farm groups and farmers across the country. When they ask me about the agriculture committee and the work we do, I say that we work well as a committee, that in fact we're one of the few committees that work well together. I always reference the reports that we put forward.

We did an outstanding report on young farmers. The whole tour we did as a committee, the work we did and the witnesses we called, all of that was much appreciated. The report we tabled in the House of Commons was appreciated, and it was a good, non-partisan report. We then moved on to—

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I think Mr. Lemieux is still trying to debate whether or not the motion is relevant. I feel as though he is almost pointing fingers when he asks why no one on the committee is concerned by what is happening or how the motion was brought before the committee.

I would simply remind the committee members that we may occasionally want to put certain items on the agenda for reasons that are indeed relevant and urgent. For example, back when we were dealing with the golden nematode issue—as I'm sure you will recall, Mr. Chair—we brought in witnesses. I, myself, put forward a motion so we could take steps to help producers affected by the golden nematode. The problem was not confined to St-Amable, potato farmers in Brian's riding were also dealing with the same problem or, at least, in Alberta. We dealt with the motion on a priority basis, because the issue was before us.

So I believe Mr. Easter's motion has to do with the fact that we are currently discussing biotechnology. We talked about the problems surrounding alfalfa, and here he is with a motion that is entirely topical and related to the issue currently before the committee.

He did not bring forward some random motion that has nothing to do with anything. It is very much related to the topic before us. That is what I would like Mr. Lemieux to understand.

• (1140)

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemieux, we know the feelings, I believe, of everyone, on whether we think this motion should be here and the reasons why it's good or bad or whatever. The bottom line is we are debating the motion, and I'll ask you to stick to the subject of whether this motion is good or bad.

Thank you.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Chair, this is what I've been doing. Part of the motion is why is it so urgent? Chair, I'm allowed to debate or discuss or present my thoughts on why this motion might be so urgent, so urgent as to disrupt the study we're now undertaking. I should not be constrained because one of the other members feels that it's not pertinent. It is pertinent. It's pertinent to me, and as an MP, I am allowed to express myself and I should not be curtailed in the way in which I express myself. If it's important to me, I have a right as an MP to state my point of view. I do not jump in and cut off others members based on that.



If there's a point of order, let them raise a proper point of order. But if there is no point of order, then you should not give it the time of day. You seem to be continually agreeing with them. I'm saying this is pertinent to the motion. The motion is disrupting committee—

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemieux, I am not favouring anybody. We've had the debate about it, okay? Unfortunately, whether we agree with it or not, we are to the motion on a moratorium on GE alfalfa. That is what we're debating, rightly or wrongly. We've already been through the debate, and for the last time, we're going to debate that—

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** We are debating it. I'm the first speaker.

**The Chair:** That's right, so let's stick to the debate on that motion.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** I am sticking to it.

**The Chair:** I will be the one making that discretion, and I don't want an argument with anybody else, including yourself, Mr. Lemieux. Let's stick to the debate on the motion.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Chair, this is one of the first times I have spoken on this motion, and I do not think it is fair for a generalization to be made that we, the committee, have debated this point already. If an MP has not expressed himself on a particular point, he or she is allowed to do so. It's not caught under the net of the committee, such that if the committee has made a comment on this, no other MP can talk about it because it's not considered to be pertinent. That's ridiculous. Each MP is allowed to express themselves on this motion, which is exactly what I'm doing, and the fact that we, the committee in general, discussed the motion last meeting should not in any way constrain me. I wasn't part of that. I wasn't saying what I'm saying now.

I appreciate the latitude, Chair, thank you.

To go to Mr. Bellavance's point, I'm agreeing that the subject matter is pertinent. Of course, it's pertinent, it's part of our study on biotechnology; our witnesses have brought it up. No one's arguing that it's not pertinent, Chair. What we are discussing is why is it urgent. When we look at the biotechnology study, we've had people come in and they've spoken about biotechnology, the broader issue of biotechnology. We—

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** On a point of order, Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and I ask for your patience for just one minute.

I thought there was something in O'Brien and Bosc, or, as Mr. Eyking refers to it, "the green book". Mr. Eyking has been here long enough that I hope he would endeavour to read the green book one of these days.

**Mr. Mark Eyking:** I've read it.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** In your ruling in the last meeting, Mr. Chairman, you referred to the fact—and I would refer you to the blues—when we were debating as to whether or not it was actually legitimate to bring this forward in a manner that is against the tradition of the committee.... I think everybody agrees that the committee has—and you said yourself—in the past practised the decorum of going step by step through the other motions first. I'd ask if you'd allow me to go back to that, as you've already stated that.

If you go to page 1047 under "Practice" and rulings by committee chairs, it says:

Committee practice is the body of unwritten rules governing committee proceedings. It consists of procedures that have developed over time and are viewed as standard operating practice. For example, while there is no Standing Order to that effect, the normal practice is to have government Members sit to the right of a committee Chair and opposition Members sit to the left.

In the absence of written rules, a committee can refer to practice when the members are uncertain as to how to proceed on a particular issue. Practice may also be used as a factor to be taken into consideration by a committee Chair who is required to make a ruling.

That being said, Mr. Chairman, I do believe that gives you the leeway to take traditional practices that our committee has had for the four years I have sat on it and say that we need to go through these other rulings first.

• (1145)

**The Chair:** Just to verify, Mr. Storseth, you're right. I wish I had seen that before, and I have to admit that I didn't. However, to deal with the motions, there is a place in there...and I will find it if you want me to.

I certainly would never question you as far as knowledge of what's in the book. On page 1052—I won't read this unless you ask me to—there is specific material that relates to that.

Even though it was past practice, I think I've been quite clear that I agree with you there, and to move from that is not traditional; however, under the rules that are in there...and that's why I ruled the way I did.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** I would ask you to refer, or at least have the clerk refer, to the section you're referring to.

My concern here, Mr. Chairman, is that if you don't go back and...

I'll wait until you're done taking a look at it.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Can I speak on this, Mr. Chair?

It is in the ruling, Mr. Chair. The fact of the matter is—

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Mr. Chair, he can't interrupt on a point of order.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** We're not allowed to quote from parliamentary procedure?

**The Chair:** No, just—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Are we not?

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Not when it's a point of order. You can't interrupt my point of order.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I can too.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** No, you can't.

**An hon. member:** You can't decide who can—

**The Chair:** Order, order!

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** You guys are so full of shit it's unbelievable.

**An hon. member:** Come on, man, a little respect.

**The Chair:** I will allow you, but they're right, he's...

I just want to deal with this one—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** How can we respect you guys over there? There's an important motion on the floor. Why don't you just debate it instead of playing games?

**The Chair:** Order, please.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Why don't you just debate it instead of...?

**The Chair:** Order, or I'm going to adjourn this meeting right now.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Have you not enough backbone to debate the issue?

**An hon. member:** Show some respect.

**The Chair:** Order!

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** You played a game to get it in front of committee. That's what happened, and that's what we're objecting to. You're the one playing games and you got it in front of committee. You're playing games.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemieux, order.

To answer Mr. Storseth, it says on page 1052, under "Moving Motions", that:

A member of a committee may move a motion at any time in the normal course of a meeting, provided that:

the notice period, if any, has been respected;

the motion is not a substantive motion or a subsidiary motion where such a motion is already being debated (a committee is required to deal with such motions one at a time);

the member has the floor to move the motion and is not doing so on a point of order; and

moving the motion does not violate any rule the committee may have adopted in respect of the period in which motions can be moved.

That is the one that I...

**An hon. member:** Mr. Chair, what—

**The Chair:** No, just hear me out.

The reason I made my ruling as I did, Mr. Storseth, is that even though we practised it, we did not actually adopt a motion with respect to that. In hindsight, to your earlier comments, maybe that was a mistake, but—

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Perhaps you could spare me a couple more seconds of your time, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** This does go to my motion for you to rule this out of order, in my point of order, because, as you explained from page 1052—I will quote you, Mr. Chairman—"the motion is not a substantive motion". That is what you said.

I refer you to page 1055, where it talks about substantive motions:

Independent proposals, divided into two types:

2. Resolution: motion in which the committee expresses its opinion on a specific matter.

That, sir, is a substantive motion. Therefore, as it says:

A member of a committee may move a motion at any time in the normal course of a meeting, provided that...the motion is not a substantive motion....

And sir, I do, as O'Brien and Bosc....

I'll wait until you're finished talking to the clerk, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chair, perhaps I could finish. Clearly in O'Brien and Bosc, on page 1047, it does give you the latitude to take under consideration practice that is typical practice of the committee. I think this is very important.

Mr. Easter, I don't want to get into the politics of this. I do think this is very important to parliamentary privilege.

My privileges as a member of Parliament, Mr. Richards' privileges, even Mr. Valeriot's, Mr. Bellavance's, and Mr. Atamanenko's privileges—even if they agree, they are giving up their privileges as a member of Parliament, and that supercedes anything we do here for political parties. That is why I do urge you to consider page 1047 and the practices.

That's not saying that Mr. Easter can't get to this very quickly, but he has to pass over these other motions.

That is the only thing I would bring forward to you, sir. I will respect your ruling. I do regret that I didn't have this information for you on the day on which we initially talked about it.

Thank you.

• (1150)

**The Chair:** I will get to you, Mr. Easter.

I have ruled on this. As you just said, some of this information I probably wish I might have had. However, on the clerk's interpretation, and I have two of them on my right here, the fact that there was no other substantive motion—call it whatever you want—being debated at the time did not contravene that substantive motion thing. That's the interpretation there, so....

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** But, Mr. Chairman, I would say that we were actually undergoing a study. The committee business of the day was actually a study of biotechnology, which committee business was what we were moving forward with. Mr. Easter didn't move his motion on the point of order, I agree with that, but he did move his motion while committee business was to be looking at the study on biotechnology. So this would be a substantive motion that would be dealing with something other than that—

**The Chair:** Actually, that day was not to be dealing with the study, Mr. Storseth. It was actually set aside for committee business at the request of the committee. It was to deal with motions. Obviously nobody, unless maybe Mr. Easter, knew what motion was going to be coming forth, so that point is probably moot.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** But that needs to be according to normal practices. I'm not arguing with you; I'm just continuing the thought process here. We were debating committee business. Under normal practices, page 1047, that committee business would have been, number one, the hog industry motion by Mr. Easter.

**The Chair:** Yes. You were right there, and I've said that before.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** So this would be a deviance. This would be a substantive motion that would have changed what we were talking about.

**The Chair:** I'll take that under—

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** A point of order, Mr. Chairman. We should not be having this debate about the adequacy of a ruling that you've already made. It's been made.

**The Chair:** Point taken.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** But I've asked—

**Mr. Francis Valeriote:** I don't think any more time should be given to anyone who wishes to deal with that. Deal with this motion now.

**An hon. member:** He's the chair, Francis. Put yourself in his chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Chair, you did make the—

**An hon. member:** That's what a point of order is all about.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I think you did make the right call at the last meeting. The argument to go through them one by one by one, as if it was the practice of the committee always—that is not absolutely the case. There have been other times that motions have been brought forward earlier. If you went back through the blues, I think you'd find that. I don't have them here, but in your ruling you abided by the practices of the House and the practices of committee. So let's get on to debating the motion, rather than playing games here.

• (1155)

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** A point of order. Just to respond to Mr. Easter's comments on the normal practice of this committee, he is right, sometimes we have moved to other superceding motions, but that was only at the unanimous consent of the committee.

**The Chair:** Okay. On this, I think enough has been said about it. There is other information here. I have made my ruling, and if it turns out to be wrong or was wrong, then I have to live with that. What I'm going to use is the analogy of a referee in a hockey game. We all know they make mistakes from time to time, but they call it as they see it at the time, based on whatever. In this case it was based on information.

So we're going to continue the debate on the motion.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to raise a point of order, though, Mr. Chair. I would like Mr. Easter to withdraw his unnecessary, unparliamentary comments that he made earlier in the committee meeting. I don't want to reiterate the words he said. They were very unparliamentary. If he withdraws them publicly now, I will not bring it forward to the House.

The other issue is that on this he has called us on this side liars. This is a pattern that happened yesterday in the veterans affairs committee. When the minister brought forward Bill C-55 and accused the Liberal opposition in the Senate of blocking the expedition without giving unanimous consent, the Liberal critic, Ms. Sgro, accused us of being liars. She has yet today to find out that she was wrong. In fact, the Liberals did block Bill C-55 in the Senate, with unanimous consent. Here, once again, we have a member, a Liberal critic—

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter, do you want to respond?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Chair, I might have used one word out of order, so I'll withdraw it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux, the floor is yours to debate the motion.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Yes. Thank you, Chair.

Before all the points of order were raised, I was in the process of saying we've had many witnesses come in front of the committee. We've been discussing biotechnology as our subject matter, of course. We've had discussions on GM as well, which we've always recognized as being a subset, quite frankly a small subset, of the biotechnology study. Everyone has been in agreement that we have to be careful that our biotechnology study does not immediately gravitate to GM and gets stuck on GM because it's just a small portion of the biotechnology sector.

Alfalfa is a small part of GM, which is part of a bigger biotechnology sector. What we have here is a microscope going in on one tiny aspect of our study. To be quite honest, Chair, and to be fair to the committee, to pass a motion like this it would only be right to have witnesses come in front of committee to discuss that aspect of the motion. It's not really fair to the committee for witnesses to come in to talk about biotechnology in general and a few specifics here and there.

One of the specifics they dwelt on, perhaps only momentarily, had to do with alfalfa, and, bang, that's what the opposition latches on to and we have a motion in front of the committee dealing with this specific issue. Yet we've had no witnesses come to talk specifically about what the impact of a moratorium might be, to talk about GM alfalfa at length. Some discussed it for more than just a moment.

We should be getting a number of different witnesses in front of committee to present their point of view on this very motion, yet that hasn't happened. They just want to ram it through, let's get to the vote. Why do we have to get to the vote? We have to get to the vote because Mr. Easter has to appease those whom he has disenfranchised.

I would say, Chair, that this motion is not well presented in front of the committee. If Mr. Easter had wanted to present this in a positive way, he would have raised this at steering committee. You're chair of the steering committee. That's why we have a steering committee—

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

My memory may not be as good as it should be because of my age, but I would say we had ample witnesses talking about precisely what the motion is dealing with and the dangers of genetically modified alfalfa. To say it was slighted I think is not correct.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** I think it's probably correct that we didn't have witnesses speaking directly to this motion. That is fair, but some witnesses did comment on GM alfalfa. It's still not a—

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** To go back to Mr. Atamanenko, what he just said is what I just said. I said we had witnesses come in front of committee and they did talk about GM alfalfa, but as a small subset of GM, which is a small subset of biotechnology. There's no conflict between what I'm saying and what Alex is saying.

What I am saying is that when you read this motion, it's very strongly worded. If we're going to have a motion like this, with a very categorical type of language, I think it's fair to the committee and the agricultural sector to have witnesses come in to talk about this motion, and not everything else that we're studying on biotechnology. But that doesn't seem to be acceptable.

If I were to draw any inference from what Mr. Atamanenko said, he's not interested in that. We are interested in that. Why wouldn't we be interested in hearing what impact this motion might have on the agricultural sector?

I am not prejudging how this should play out. I'm just saying it's a strongly worded motion. We should have people come in front of committee to talk about it. That's why we have a committee. We have a committee so that people can come in front of it to talk and share their support, lack of support, or thoughts—pros and cons—on things like this.

Yes, we have had some discussion, but it wasn't focused discussion that looked at exactly what this motion is proposing. That's what we should have had.

On what triggered this, Mr. Chair, if this motion had been brought in front of committee in a more respectful and positive way, it would have started at steering committee. We've done this before. Again, I do not understand why everything is so exceptional and destructive with this one motion. It would have come up at steering committee.

It would have come to the committee and we would have allocated proper time for it. If it's so important and urgent, we would have allocated proper time. We would have put together some witness lists. We would have had the committee call some witnesses. We would have allocated the proper amount of time, instead of just trying to ram it through, which is what's happening today. They just want to ram it through.

I'm going to finish my comments there.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Wow, I can't believe it.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** I might be back, but I'll end my comments there and simply say that if this is so urgent and so important, then the committee should perhaps have a more thorough look at it. That would include having witnesses.

Thank you.

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

Now I have Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Thank you, Chair.

We should be welcoming witnesses and thanking witnesses here today instead of dealing with this. This is unfortunate. It's frustrating, as a rookie member of this committee, to see some of the things that go on here.

**Mr. Mark Eyking:** Well, you're not a rookie anymore.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I guess not.

I want to mention some facts that I think need to come out on this motion.

The first fact is that Roundup Ready alfalfa went through the regulatory process in 2005 in Canada. It was deemed safe. It did go to that level, there's no question about that. I know Mr. Easter is aware of that because he was the parliamentary secretary at the time. The Liberal government was in charge at the time and they actually were respecting the science-based reason for bringing it forward. I'm not saying they did anything wrong or right, but it was at that level. There were a lot of people at that time who said they didn't want it, and we saw Monsanto back away because of that.

We also have what we call a registration process here in Canada. At this time there is no Roundup Ready alfalfa in the queue in the registration process in Canada that I'm aware of. Monsanto isn't bringing anything forward. No other seed company is bringing anything forward. As far as there being an immediate threat to farmers here in Canada, there really isn't one. It doesn't mean in two years from now there might be one. It doesn't mean that things can change. There's no question that is a possibility.

What is realistic is that any type of seed that comes into the Canadian market in alfalfa will have to go through the registration process. That registration process is fairly regimented. It also involves all the committee players within the community. If you look at how they go through the varietal approval process, they not only would have to prove to their peers in the industry that this is something good for the industry, but they also would have to go through trials. They'd have to create their data pack for that registration committee. There's no threat in Canada tomorrow or this spring of this seed hitting the market. There's probably no threat this seed will hit the market in 2012 or 2013.

That is where I get a little confused about the emergency nature of this motion, other than the possibility of an election coming. That's disappointing because stuff like this is what makes people angry, when you start playing politics with serious issues. That's exactly what everybody here is doing today.

It's really interesting. We entered this study on biotechnology in good faith. I know Mr. Valeriote entered it in good faith, and we've worked very well together on it. We've heard witnesses. I know, Alex, you've appreciated the fact that we've been able to hear some of your witnesses. Even though your bill didn't pass, we were able to allow some of that information to come forward under that study. I think that's been very important. We've identified that there's a problem with the approval process sometimes when the markets are involved. The organics have pointed that out to us. In this case, the alfalfa growers obviously have pointed that out to us too. The reality, though, is that we need to hear from all sides of the industry in the study, and that study is not complete yet.

That's why I get a little dismayed when I see, for political reasons, a motion like this one come forward prematurely without all the facts on the table. It's the same as going to trial and only letting one witness testify and turning all the rest away just so you can get the verdict you want. It's not fair. It's not appropriate. We as committee members really are not in a position to say whether this is a good motion or a bad motion. How do we take something like this based on limited information and move it through?

Mr. Atamanenko, I know you've done a lot of studies on it and you have your personal beliefs, and I respect that. I think for a lot of us other committee members, we want to keep an open mind. We want to look at the whole process. We want to talk to all the players in the industry. There's no question that we want to do what's best for the industry and for Canadian farmers, but would this motion actually do that? Would this motion actually create the effect that you want to create, or is it a whole pile of other issues?

Is it going to affect our beef industry, for example? We used the science base to open up markets. That's what we've done in Asia. It's what we've done around the world. We've argued science, that our beef is safe, and that has opened up markets. Our minister has worked tirelessly around the globe opening up markets for our beef producers, and we're getting the rewards for that work. We're getting some really nice prices on cattle, record prices in some cases. In fact, Chair, I think you were telling me that some red heifers are starting to go for around \$1,800 apiece. Two years ago they couldn't get \$200 for them. Those are things that are working.

• (1205)

But if a motion like this were to come forward and all of a sudden a country like China said, "Well, you don't use science as the base for your decisions, so why should we, and we're not going to allow you to have access", what would that do to our cattle guys?

It's the same scenario in the canola industry. We've looked at that in perspective, too. We've used science to open up markets for GMO canola. We've used science to argue that this stuff is safe. And science has proved that it's safe.

People have different perceptions on science, and we respect that. The organic industry has its own perception, and we respect that. But as government we have to take a step back and ask whether this is safe or not. That's our decision that we have to make. Is it our role to be marketing organics? Is it our role to be marketing other niche products, or is it for the market to decide for itself? And what do you do when you're trying to market an organic product when you see a GMO product growing right next door to it?

Those are the things that this study was supposed to try to address. What we've done by bringing this motion forward prematurely is to actually sandbag the study. We've tainted the waters. We've polluted it in such a way that we've already made up our own recommendations before we've heard all the witnesses.

This is very unfortunate. When we get to the recommendations in the study, it makes me wonder whether there will be honest and fair recommendations, or will there be bias based on information of the past and not on the witnesses we've heard?

Right now we are making decisions based on half the witnesses. And as I said, that has a domino effect on the whole agriculture sector. We may think we're only dealing with Roundup alfalfa. A lot of people would say they don't want it. There are farmers in my area who say they don't want it. I agree. I can see why they don't want it and I understand why they don't want it. But we have to look at the big picture too. If we send this message out in this way, at this point in time, first of all, any witness coming forward in the future would say, "Well, why bother? You've already made your decision. Your mind is made up." You've eroded that option. You have other

industries that are going to be impacted, indirectly or directly. It's going to cause serious harm to them.

Again, I question the logic of doing that. As we move forward as a committee, we've reviewed the product registration process and we've reviewed the regulatory process. We went out to see the process in Saskatoon. I know Mr. Atamanenko didn't come to Saskatoon, which is unfortunate. He would have seen what was involved in going through the regulatory process. Then he maybe would have had a better understanding when the scientists and researchers were talking about what they have to go through in the registration process. You have the regulatory process and the registration process, and he maybe would have understood why it was important to have been in Saskatoon, at the University of Saskatchewan, to listen to the witnesses, to talk to the researchers, and to actually listen to both sides of the story before making a conclusion. But of course he decided that Saskatchewan wasn't important and he didn't attend.

• (1210)

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Eyking.

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Mr. Chair, I think we should follow the rules of the House and not get into this "somebody was there, somebody wasn't there". I think it's a bit of an attack on a person to say they were at this meeting or they weren't at that meeting. For various reasons, we can't be at all the meetings when we're on tour, so I think we should keep it out of there.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I'll concede that, Mr. Eyking.

Mr. Atamanenko, I did not mean to offend you. I just was stating a fact. He was not there.

I guess as we move forward as a committee...is this the way we want to move forward? Is this really the thing we should be doing? We've already heard Mr. Lemieux talk about the order of precedence, the process we used to follow when we actually were dealing with motions.

I'm actually sitting here wondering.... My motion is sitting there now. What is the use of my bringing forward a motion? As a member of the government, what's the use? If you're not going to let me bring it forward, if you're not going to hear it, if you're not going to let me vote on it, if you're not going to let me speak on it, and if you're just going to ram through what you want to bring through on your own, then why should I bother? Where's the fairness in that? It turns this into a kangaroo court, and that's unfortunate because we didn't need to do that.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** You get that with Harper every day.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Again, Mr. Easter has been around a long time and he's a little jaded, but reality is reality.

As a member of the government now, the way we've set up this committee and the way we're acting in this committee, I can't bring a motion forward and actually, honestly, think you'll consider it, that you'll give it the benefit of the doubt. Why would I say that? Why would I even think that I can work with you, because it's politicized before it even hits the table? It could be the absolute right thing for farmers and I know you'd vote against it, and that's unfortunate. That's really sad.

So how do we move forward, because we're in a log jam here? How are we going to do what's right for farmers? How are we going to address this issue? How are we going to actually salvage the report that we spent so many hours and money on reporting?

I guess we can look at an amendment.

Mr. Easter, you would have to agree to this, probably, but I would recommend that we do an amendment to his motion. If you're willing to listen to it, I'll read it to you, Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I'm listening to you.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Under the existing motion:

That the Committee recommend that the government place a moratorium on any approval of Roundup Ready Alfalfa until the Government completes the public research into: (a) Canada's ability to ensure the genetic integrity, production and preservation of a diversity of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), non-GMO and organic alfalfa production, (b) the ability of Canada's handling and transportation system to ensure segregation of forage seeds and detection of genetic co-mingling in alfalfa seeds and hay, (c) the development of industry-led, third party audit and verification systems; and that these—

**An hon. member:** Why don't you slow down for the translator?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** It's too fast?

**An hon. member:** Yes. You need to slow down a bit.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I'm sorry. Do you want me to repeat it, or are you okay, André?

**An hon. member:** He's okay. He's exhausted.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Just repeat the amendment. I've got the motion.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I just want to make sure. Again, on the motion, these are the things the report was supposed to do.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** What's the amendment?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** But these were the things the report was supposed to do. That's the frustrating part. I guess that's what I'm going to say, that—

**The Chair:** Are you proposing an amendment?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I am proposing an amendment, Chair.

In that amendment, I would suggest that the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food recommend that, and this is where the amendment will start, “as part of the study on biotechnology, the Committee study and include recommendations regarding”, and then we stroke out “the government place a moratorium”.

Basically, what I'm trying to do is ask you guys to let us finish the report before this comes forward, so that we can actually bring forward witnesses on both sides of the story, so that we don't taint the report that we're actually in the process of writing.

•(1215)

**The Chair:** A point of order.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** That is not an amendment.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter, are you supporting or—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** No, I don't think it's an amendment. I think it changes the intent of the motion. The intent of the motion is for

quick action right now, not a study that might not be done until this time next year.

So it changes the intent of the motion, Mr. Chair. The motion is on an urgent and pressing matter.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** A point of order, Mr. Chair, on the discussion of the amendment.

Whether I think Mr. Easter is saying something very seriously or not, I don't believe this does change the intent of the motion. If you read the motion, the intent is to place a moratorium on any approval of Roundup Ready alfalfa. There's nothing in the motion that talks about expediency. There's nothing in the motion that says it needs to happen expeditiously. All the motion is saying is that the committee recommends that government place a moratorium.

Mr. Hoback's amendment, as I read it—and I may not have caught all of it—is simply saying that the committee should do its due diligence first, complete the study, and then make that same motion.

**The Chair:** Just for some clarification, Mr. Hoback, on the last part of this, did you read “and that motion be reported to the House”?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I would strike that too, because that would be pending the report at that point in time.

**The Chair:** I think, from my first glance at this—and I'm going to reread it—that it doesn't change the whole thing. What it does is include it in the study. To go right away from this thing would be a total change in it. I'd like to read it one more time, just to be clear.

I'm still of the same thinking, that this would allow this motion, but in the realm of the report. The only thing is—and this is only a suggestion, because it's not my amendment—that it somehow could be pointed out a little more clearly that it be reported back through the committee. That would maybe clarify it a little more.

As it is, it doesn't make the motion go away or whatever, Mr. Easter; it just includes it in the report. Whether you support that or not, I think it's allowable.

Mr. Bellavance, go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** As I understood it, Randy's amendment would remove any mention of a moratorium. In my view, that changes the purpose of the motion entirely. I am, by no means, convinced that the amendment is admissible.

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. André Bellavance:** You aren't the translator, Blake. You aren't the one doing the translating.

[English]

**The Chair:** Order, please.

Your point is taken, André, but in the realm of the report, I think it could still come out of that report from this committee whether to recommend the moratorium or not. I think at this stage, with the intent to have it in the report, it's not a key issue. It doesn't exclude the committee's decision to still ask for or recommend that or not.

● (1220)

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** To my committee members, if we'd seen a variety coming into the registration process right now, then I would agree with Mr. Easter that it's an emergency, and then we'd need to really look at this. But there is not a variety coming into the registration process at this point in time in Canada. The reality is that once they start the registration process, it takes two years to get through it. So where is the emergency nature of this motion? If that's the case, why can't we deal with this as part of the biotech study?

That is my logic in this amendment.

**The Chair:** Your point is taken.

We're now debating the motion as amended.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** We're debating the amendment. The motion hasn't been amended yet.

**The Chair:** You are correct.

Mr. Hoback, you still have the floor if you want to speak to it.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I guess my logic here is that this is a way we can move forward and still salvage the report with credibility. This allows us to move forward on this topic. I think we can give comfort to the folks in the organic sector that we are not going to ignore this issue, that we're actually going to address it in the study, which I think we've been doing already. As I said before, there is no seed variety in the registration process at this time. It does give us the time to do a proper and thorough study of the process for the approval of a new variety. It also allows us to hear all the sides of the story, which I think is very important.

It's always dangerous when we start playing politics with stuff like this because of the unintended consequences that can come from it. This is one way to diffuse the issue, move it forward, and actually do a good report. If we don't do this, what we're actually going to do is tell our witnesses who come forward on the report from now forward that we already have our minds made up on how we're going to move on this report. If I were a witness, I would ask why I would bother coming to testify to the committee in that situation.

This is one way to maintain the integrity of the report. It doesn't undermine it; it allows the committee to move forward on a report in a positive manner, and it still addresses the concerns that Mr. Easter has validly brought forward and that the organic sector in alfalfa has brought forward. We're not leaving anything to chance. We're not taking anything out. We're just doing it in a proper process and order.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Shipley.

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On the amendment on the first motion, we started this study.... I know the comment has been made that we've been two years getting to this study. I guess it would be two years getting through the study, if that's how you guys want it to happen. We started this study in February. This is now March. We've been doing it about a month. We've wasted, now, another whole day, when we could have had witnesses in.

If you're really concerned about moving ahead, then this amendment will get the support of those of us on this side, and

should have the support of you on that side, as we address the issue of Roundup Ready alfalfa, as has been mentioned.

I keep going back to the issue of the 16 motions that are on the floor, Mr. Chairman. All of a sudden, this is now a trumped-up emergency, when we know there isn't any emergency on the forefront with respect to any Roundup Ready alfalfa being registered and brought into use in Canada. There isn't. There will be the full process during which industry, agriculture, and research will all have the opportunity, when that time comes, to have their input.

Clearly, what this resolution has done, the first one.... If you want to stall it, that will be up to you guys, in terms of Friday, I guess. But if we proceed and move, and the government stays in place, we'll actually wrap up this study, likely, in another month. There's no reason not to. We can actually wrap this up and have a recommendation. That's why this amendment is so important, because now we're not separating away.

I'm sorry. I cannot be convinced anymore that next week there will not be another emergency that comes up. When you look at this list, I can tell you that the ones Mr. Easter has brought forward, and some others.... There's always an emergency. The sky is going to fall if we don't deal with this.

Now on this amendment, we are saying okay. We cannot agree with that first one, because there is no emergency. But hold our feet to the fire as a committee. Let's bring in the witnesses who will help us get real input on what this motion is about, and let's make it part of our committee recommendations. Then all of us will have input into it.

How does that move ahead? Actually, Mr. Easter, and to the opposition across the room, we can actually make this happen within a month or a month and a half. It will bring it forward instead of putting some undue time limit on a moratorium, for which we don't have any of the background or any of the research that has been done on it.

Like Mr. Hoback, I have a number of organic farmers who have raised a number of issues and concerns, as have I. But I'm not going to shortchange a process of registration that is in place just for political gain. I'm sorry. I'm usually not partisan, but that is how I see this one.

We did this in Ontario. Frank is from Ontario. Our provincial government did this. They shortchanged scientific evidence and took a political move to take cosmetic pesticides away. We cannot use them. But if you have a golf course you can use them; you just have to pay more money to get the licence.

Once you start taking the political aspect and taking away the science, Mr. Hoback and certainly our parliamentary secretary have said, we have based....

Talk to your farmers. Talk to your beef producers. Talk to your pork producers. Why have they been able to open markets in these countries that had been closed, and not just open them up but open up new ones? It is because we continually say that our research is based on science. Our development registration is based on science.

Once you start moving away from that, what you're going to start to do is take away the benefits that agriculture and farmers have by having all these pesticides, chemicals, fertilizers, feeds, and additives taken away. Who's going to invest? Now you're going to shunt aside science and research, and some political body is going to make a political decision and say—for whatever the reason is—that they don't think science is any good. So I support the amendment to the motion, because what it does is put back onto this committee the responsibility we have taken on during the biotech study.

• (1225)

We haven't even talked about the livestock industry yet. I have producers that I'd like to bring in to talk about the benefits of biotechnology in the livestock industry, but we can't seem to get away from this whole GMO thing, which is actually a very small part of what we're studying in terms of biotechnology.

So I support this, Mr. Chair, and at the end of it, I think it's all in how you read it: “that these findings be reported back to the Committee” and then “be reported to the House”. It would be reported to the House as part of the committee report once the committee has dealt with it. That's fair. As long as that was clearly understood and put in, I could live with that. There isn't any reason why we as a committee don't take on our responsibilities and bring in the people we want...start to branch out in terms of what biotechnology is all about, and then bring in the people we would need to address the issues and find out so that we understand the GMO process.

I think that's clearly part of what has happened here. As mentioned, it was brought forward in 2005. We're now in 2011. I don't think many people have really and truly understood the process. What brought attention to this? It was the United States. Because they got it, I would assume.... You should never make those assumptions, but in talking to people who have phoned me, they've said that it's coming to Canada, that it will be here within a few months. That's because we don't understand the process—what our science, our research and technology, and our process here in Canada are all about.

Mr. Chairman, I'll defer those comments right now to those...and only with the comment that I certainly support this. It takes back the responsibility. As long as we understand in the amended motion that it comes to committee and it goes to the House as part of that committee report, then certainly I would support that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1230)

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

Mr. Richards.

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It's a privilege to actually have the opportunity to address this. I know that when this was brought forward, I had a motion that was ahead of it, and I was not even given the opportunity to address the committee as to why my motion should be debated prior to this one, which was brought up far after mine was.

I'm in support of this amendment, and it's simply because it makes absolute sense to debate this in the context of the broader issue, which is biotechnology, and looking at it as part of the study we're undertaking and presently doing.

A number of farmers and other witnesses have come before this committee as part of that study. I see some of the individuals here even today who were part of that study who spoke to our committee and were here to testify as witnesses to that study. I would say that it would be a huge insult to those individuals, those in the room and those otherwise who have been here as part of this study that we've been undertaking, to go forward with something, a motion like this one, outside of the context of the study and basically disregarding the testimony we've heard, disregarding the concerns we've heard and the points that have been raised by the witnesses and through the committee process as part of the broader issue.

Frankly, that does seem to be a pattern that Mr. Easter and the Liberal Party do seem to have, that they just want to do whatever they feel is the right thing to do that day for their political interests, and only for their political interests, and to heck with what we've heard and to heck with what witnesses want and what farmers want in this country. Let's just move forward with our political agenda and disregard all the testimony we've heard, disregard everything we've heard. I think it's completely disrespectful and completely irresponsible to move forward in that manner. That's why I believe this amendment is the proper way to proceed. We can look at this particular issue in the context of the broader study we are doing.

To go to the motion that Mr. Easter is making in terms of why this amendment is the way to go, rather than to look at it on a one-off kind of basis, as is being proposed in the original motion, I have to then look, to make a judgment on that, to the intent behind the motion and try to understand what that intent could be. I come to the conclusion that there could only be one of two reasons why this motion would have been brought forward. First of all, the one reason could simply be what I'm saying, that it's completely politically motivated. Obviously, there's no secret out there that the Liberal Party and their other coalition partners want to force an unnecessary election on Canadians at this time, despite the fact that it's very obvious that the best thing for the country would be to move forward, to continue to see the growth that we're seeing in the economy, to continue to move our way smoothly out of the recession.

Certainly our government will bring forward a budget later today that will be the next step in doing just that. Certainly that would be the right thing to do going forward. I would say that when we talk particularly about this committee, when we're talking about agriculture and the best interests of farmers, and there's the study that we've undertaken looking at a very promising industry, looking at some of the challenges that might be there and some of the opportunities that might be there in that industry, being biotechnology, certainly the right thing to do in that instance, for the economy, farmers, and consumers, would be to go forward with that study. That's why this amendment is being proposed, I believe, and that's why I would support it.



But the Liberal Party, Mr. Easter in particular, doesn't want to do that. They don't want to do what's in the best interest of Canadians, what's in the best interest of farmers. What they want to do is pursue a political agenda, just like they want to force an unnecessary election. They want to try to get this motion through prior to the unnecessary election.

What I would say to them is, rather than do that, why don't we do things in the proper course, in the proper manner, which is to take a look at this issue in a broader context, move forward with our study, and forget about their opportunistic, unnecessary election that they want to force? We can move on with this study and get this wrapped up in a reasonably short manner. We can do it in a way that takes into account all the broad spectrum of issues within biotechnology, what some of those challenges are that could be there, what some of the opportunities are.

• (1235)

Then we can take into account what the witnesses have to say, hear from farmers, from Canadians, from consumers, and from those involved in the industry, and take all of that into context and into our understanding before making a decision about one particular small aspect of the broader context of biotechnology.

I would say that one of the reasons they might want to move forward would be just the political games they are playing right now by trying to force an election, trying to move something forward prior to forcing the election that they're trying to foist on Canadians.

As I travel my riding and elsewhere in the country, I have not really heard one person say now is the time for an election and wants to see that. Certainly to try to pretend somehow that this is an emergency.... The only reason why it's an emergency is because they want to force that election. As has been pointed out by a number of my colleagues here today already, there certainly has been no indication that there are any registrations coming forward. Certainly the Liberal Party would probably like to try to rewrite history a little bit. Mr. Easter would probably like to try to rewrite history a little bit. Certainly it was their government that brought forward trials on this. There has been no intention expressed to expand on that. There have been no registrations brought forward.

I don't really see where the emergency is at this point in time, other than, of course, the fact that they want to try to force this unnecessary election. For them, it's a political emergency, and that's the only emergency there is in this thing.

As I sat here thinking about it, is there any other reason why they might want to try to bring this forward on this kind of a basis right now, outside of the study we're doing on the broader topic that this fits into? The only other conclusion I could draw is that possibly—

**Mr. Francis Valeriote:** Mr. Chair, a point of order. He's not debating the amendment to the motion. He's debating the original motion.

Would you ask him to keep his comments to the amendment?

**The Chair:** My attention was taken away briefly there, but I will ask you to stick to the debate on the amendment.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Of course, Mr. Chair. I indicated at the beginning of my comments what I was doing. I was trying to look at

the pros and cons of going forward with this amendment compared to the original motion. I believe that to provide comparative context I have to provide both sides of that argument and try to understand the other side of the argument. That's what I'm trying to do, Mr. Chairman.

Although I appreciate Mr. Valeriote, I would suggest that maybe he put his BlackBerry down and pay attention to the full context of my speech, and then he would understand what I'm speaking of. Probably he's reading something from his leader telling him try to force an unnecessary election on Canadians right now.

I have a motion before this committee that was ahead of this one.

**Mr. Francis Valeriote:** Mr. Chairman, would you ask him to stick to the amendment, please? Now he's talking about his own motion.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I am in the context, Mr. Valeriote.

**Mr. Francis Valeriote:** It's not in context, Mr. Richards, at all.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I'm trying to understand what the reasons would be for moving forward with this, to compare what would happen if there was to be an amendment made.

I'm trying to understand—and I indicated at the beginning of my remarks that I'm trying to understand—what the reasons would be for Mr. Easter's wanting to move forward on this basis rather than pursuing this under the study that is being proposed by the amendment.

As I said, one reason would be that it seems to be motivated only by political reasons. The other reason could be that they see the motion I have before the committee, and I would like to quickly tell you what that motion is because I think it is important for the committee to understand what the opportunity cost is of going forward with this.

I had a motion before the committee that was in relation to the Canadian Wheat Board. It was that the committee congratulate the Canadian Chamber of Commerce for the endorsement of a voluntary Canadian Wheat Board, which it made at its annual meeting—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** This has nothing to do with this amendment. If people want to see the motions, they are available on the list.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Then if for some reason they really don't want that read into the record, I've had the opportunity to address the committee on why it is important that we talk about this. But anyway, regardless, it was a motion about the Canadian Wheat Board, and I would have to assume that maybe the reason he brought this forward would have been to try to avoid talking about the Canadian Wheat Board, because he wants to force western Canadian farmers to not have the choice of where to market their grain. In order to do that, he had to run roughshod over the committee, over our privileges as members. I know myself, my motion being the one that was run over...he's run against all practices of the committee and shown no respect for committee practice, procedure, and absolutely no respect for the other members of the committee.

So as I thought about it and tried to understand why he would want to bring this forward, those are the two reasons I came up with: one being his political gamesmanship, and the other one trying to run roughshod over the rest of the committee, so we don't have to debate the fact that he's trying to remove the possibility for western farmers to have marketing freedom. Again, it goes back to the broader point. There is a lack of concern or care for what farmers in this country are asking for, what they want to see happen. Instead, it's all about political games and trying to force an unnecessary election, and in the process trying to force some of these things through that he wants to get on the record prior to forcing that.

So I would suggest that we want to look at this in the context of the broader study being proposed by this amendment, and try to put it into the context of looking at the biotechnology industry as a whole, trying to look at it in the context of what are the opportunities, what are the challenges, and what are some of the issues out there, and hear from farmers in doing so, rather than just moving forward based on some political strategy that Mr. Easter and the Liberal Party have. Let's hear from farmers; let's debate it in the broader context of the study. If you bring this forward today, is someone else going to bring forward one other little aspect of this tomorrow, etc.?

What we should do instead is look at biotechnology as a package, as a whole, and look at the issues out there and make our judgments—whether it be on GM alfalfa, whether it be on other aspects of biotechnology—and do it on that basis. Although they claim there's an emergency, I certainly don't see where this emergency is, as has already been outlined. No registrations are being proposed or put forward at this time. If there were, there certainly is a long process behind that, I'm sure, and I just don't see the emergency here.

I would very strongly suggest, Mr. Chairman, that we support this amendment, because I think it's the only way to give some real context to the discussion, to look at this in the broader context and make a judgment based on all the facts, particularly having the information that's provided to us by farmers. Rather than just trying to move forward with the political games of the Liberal Party and their coalition partners, let's look at what farmers have to say and base our decisions on the broader issue at hand, based on what farmers would tell us.

Thank you.

● (1240)

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

Now I have Mr. Easter speaking to the amendment.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly oppose the amendment. There has been a lot of discussion by the previous speakers on the motions on the paper, trying to leave the impression that some of those motions are frivolous.

I can tell you that the motion that came forward last March on hogs and the other one last October on hogs were extremely important at that time. I can tell you with all honesty that had we been able to deal with those motions at that time.... I regret not pushing the issue at that time because we were doing other committee business. But I can name you farmers who are not

farming now because we didn't deal with that issue. So they were not frivolous motions. Don't try to give me that line.

This motion, the amendment, comes forward at.... There comes a time in parliamentary life when parliamentarians have to make some decisions. Having heard the witnesses during the Bill C-474 debate—

**An hon. member:** What witnesses?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** We heard a lot of witnesses on Bill C-474, although you folks blocked some from coming forward. We heard a number of witnesses on the biotechnology debate.

There's real concern out there in the organic farming community at the moment—in the alfalfa industry, especially in Manitoba—about GM alfalfa. We have a responsibility as parliamentarians, if we're doing our job, to act on that. The amendment is effectively a delay tactic by the Government of Canada in making the necessary decisions to give the alfalfa industry some security in terms of a moratorium as it relates to GM alfalfa.

Randy, in his remarks, is right about the registration process. I faced Monsanto on rBGH a number of years ago. We know they can move forward aggressively to register if they like. There is nothing in place at the moment to assure farmers that proper protocols will be followed to protect those farmers who do not want GM alfalfa...from it coming forward.

Simply put, I speak in opposition to the amendment because I see it as another delay tactic. The original motion, when you put it in context, is not an absolute ban. It lays out the protocols, public research, and various areas that have to be covered before anything can happen on GM alfalfa.

It's essential and urgent to give some assurance to the farming community. Almost everyone is opposed to genetically modified alfalfa.

As a last point, I've talked to Syngenta and Monsanto. In fact, I have been lobbied fairly aggressively by them since the motion came forward. When you say that nobody is interested in their product, they'll concede that point and say that if they put it out there people might be interested, and it would be an affront to the market if they weren't allowed to do so. Well, I think it's an affront to those farmers who are in the organic industry now, to those farmers who have strong alfalfa markets in Europe, if we leave all the power and authority in the hands of Monsanto, which wants to bring forward this GM alfalfa.

So I oppose the amendment on the simple basis that I see it as a delay tactic on the part of the government. I believe we need to make a decision, and we need to make it today.

● (1245)

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

Mr. Lemieux is next on the amendment.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** On the amendment, Chair, yes.

First of all, I'd like to thank Mr. Hoback for his amendment. I think it's a good amendment because it tries to deal with the issue. Mr. Hoback is acting very much in the role of peacemaker, and he's a good MP that way. He's trying to bridge two sides. I'm quite opposed to the main motion; Mr. Easter is quite in favour of the main motion. However, this is a way of bringing the two sides together, and it's a real attempt to put good spirit and good faith back into the committee, because no one has said—at least I haven't heard it said—that there isn't concern with Roundup Ready alfalfa. No one has said that this shouldn't be addressed. Mr. Hoback certainly isn't saying that in his motion. What he is saying, Chair, is that the motion should be rolled into the report. In fact, it's directing the committee to ensure that it is specifically addressed in its biotechnology study and in the biotechnology report.

So it's taking Mr. Easter's concerns, it's validating them, in a sense, and saying, yes, we need to look at that specifically. That's what this motion is doing. So I think it's actually a good step forward, and it's a step between two opposing sides. I'm surprised that Mr. Easter rejects it outright, because it would accomplish what he wanted to accomplish in terms of the issue being addressed.

I think Mr. Shipley brought up a really good point earlier, in that the opposition said the study's going to take two years. I hope not. I don't think we'd be rendering any service to the farm community or to this committee if we took two years to do the report.

This report has to be long enough, of course, that it encompasses the main players and that the committee hears sufficient testimony from a number of witnesses with different points of view—we don't want to hear witnesses from just one point of view—but it doesn't need to be two years long. I mean, come on. I think the committee can work much better than that, and we have worked much better than that when we've done our other reports. Some reports have been a little bit longer than others, but it simply depends on the breadth of the subject matter, the scope of the subject matter.

Again, back to what Mr. Hoback is proposing here, he's simply proposing that the matter be specifically addressed by the committee in the report. I think that's a very important point, because there are a couple of things. The first point I'll bring up is that the motion without the amendment basically says moratorium. It's moratorium or bust. Everything or nothing. Really? Is there anything else in between? Shouldn't we look at that? Must it be a moratorium or nothing?

We don't normally deal in categorical that way. I think as a committee we try to find, perhaps, options, alternatives, different ways to solve a problem, but we haven't had a chance to discuss that with witnesses; we haven't had a chance to discuss this at committee. We just have that it's black, white, yes, no; it's one solution or another solution. How about allowing us to flesh this out a bit?

So we need further discussion on this, and I think it would be fair to everybody if the committee actually took a serious look at this matter, not a superficial look, which is what this is doing. This is like a "one solution only" and everything else doesn't measure up. We should be taking a serious look at this matter, and we should be looking at what other options may or may not be possible. We can only do that when we have witnesses and when we have time to discuss it in a non-adversarial atmosphere, which is definitely not the

case over these last two days, given the way in which this motion was handled. I think we can get things back on track, and I thank Mr. Hoback for basically taking the steps to help get us back on track as a committee.

The reason I bring up that there might be other alternatives is because Canada has one of the most stringent and rigorous regulatory systems in terms of the introduction of new products. It's based on sound science, but of course it also needs the input of farmers. This is part of the debate that we had on Mr. Atamanenko's bill. As part of our tour on biotechnology, when we were out west, it was explained to us that to bring a new trait into the marketplace can take in the neighbourhood of—it's on average—about 10 years of work, and it's in the neighbourhood of \$100 million to \$150 million. Those are big numbers. That's a lot of time, effort, and resources. That's a lot of money that gets invested into developing a particular trait.

● (1250)

I don't know many companies that would invest that time and money if there are no buyers. Who would the buyers be? Farmers. Farmers definitely have a fundamental role to play in whether or not a product actually makes it to market, because if farmers won't buy something, what's the point of producing it? What's the point of investing 10 years and \$100 million to \$150 million to no effect?

This is a key point. It's a debate we had regarding Mr. Atamanenko's bill, and it's tied into the approach to GM. That's why I'm saying there might be other measures than just a flat-out moratorium. We should look at this in detail. We should look at it in a serious manner, not a superficial manner.

The other thing, too, Chair, is that when we produce our final report, I think the committee needs to understand the message it wants to deliver on biotechnology. In other words, we have to look at all the testimony. We have to look at the site visits we did. We have to consider the evidence that was presented and the points of view that were presented to committee. We have to take all of that into consideration. We also have to apply our own experience, our own expertise, our own judgments as elected officials. If some of us have particular backgrounds—I am a parliamentary secretary, and Mr. Easter was a parliamentary secretary for agriculture—we roll that into our report. We have to have an understanding of what messaging we want to send to the agricultural sector, to our farmers, when we issue this report.

I can tell you, for example, that I'd have a concern if on the one hand we said in the report that biotechnology is good, that it helps our farmers, and it will help farmers be more competitive, but on the other hand we said that we are calling for a moratorium. Someone standing back five feet would say, "I'm sorry, you just confused me. Are you for it or against it?"

A moratorium is very drastic action. I'm not saying it can't be taken. It can be taken. I'm saying that when we're talking about the amendment, when we're looking at building it into the report, this gives the committee the opportunity to look at its approach to biotechnology. I think one of the issues farmers may have with committee work, for example, is if diametrically opposed initiatives are contained within the same report. They wouldn't understand whether we were for or against, and whether we were suggesting a moratorium on a whole bunch of other things too. Quite frankly, Chair, I wouldn't be surprised if some of them came back and asked us whether we had considered this or that.

I would put forward to Mr. Easter that if he wants to question witnesses on this matter, he now has the opportunity. I have not heard a lot of questions and answers on a moratorium on GM alfalfa. I've heard some of our witnesses mention it, but I haven't seen the committee pursue this point. I have not seen opposition MPs or government MPs pursue this point and actually ask the question. It's fine for witnesses to say they are not in favour of GM alfalfa and they think there should be a moratorium. Okay, but how about follow-up questions such as: What do they think the impact would be on their sector? What do they think the impact would be on the wider agricultural sector? Have they done any consultation, or is that their personal opinion? Is it their personal opinion, or is it the opinion of their group? Has their group consulted more widely? Have they spoken to the OFA or the CFA? There are other farm groups and organizations that these groups or representatives might be plugged into, perhaps should be plugged into. How wide had they consulted before they made the statement that they think there should be a moratorium on something? I'd like to ask what they think the repercussions of a moratorium would be. I'd like to ask about other possibilities.

• (1255)

Why don't we pool some of the information from the witnesses in terms of what other possibilities there could be? Other possibilities could include some valid ideas that they put on the table. They're on the ground, Chair. They're the farmers. They know where their best interests lie, and I think we'll probably get a number of good ideas. Again, by including Mr. Hoback's amendment as part of the motion, I actually think we can have a fuller understanding of what a particular moratorium on GM alfalfa might do, if that's the end

solution that is being proposed, or how that might work as advantage or a disadvantage when it comes to the agricultural sector.

As I said, I'm somewhat surprised that Mr. Easter is so opposed to that. I'm also surprised that he actually hasn't participated in the debate today. If the motion is so important, why hasn't he been speaking in favour of it?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** You can't get a word in edgewise around here. How could you?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Chair, we know he can get a word in edgewise. You know, he could add himself to the speakers list. In fact, other than raising a point of order, no other MP, no other opposition—

**Mr. Francis Valeriote:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

I asked to be on that list at the beginning of this meeting. I was not put on the list. I've already debated that with you, so don't you dare start talking about who hasn't been on the list and ready to speak, because only Mr. Easter has been.

You guys have taken over the debate. You know that. I'm angry, yes. I'm angry because this has been just an obscene presentation by you today to take over the full meeting so that the debate could not occur. Just because somebody disagrees with you, Mr. Lemieux, does not mean that we are not functioning properly.

• (1300)

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Does he have the floor? Who has the floor, Chair? Can I address that for a moment?

**Mr. Francis Valeriote:** Mr. Chair, we're going to adjourn, and I want to know that I am first on that list when we return on Thursday.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** No. Why should you have that privilege?

**Mr. Francis Valeriote:** Because I've asked to be on this list.

**The Chair:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Get on the list on the next meeting.

**The Chair:** Mr. Valeriote—

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** With that outrage, I think you know what I'm talking about. You forced yourself upon the committee—

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemieux, order.

The meeting is over time now. We adjourn until Thursday.







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