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Chair

The Honourable Judy A. Sgro

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (The Honourable Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)): Committee members, we're in open session as we deal with matters related to committee business.

Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair—oh, I'm sorry. We're in open session now. I was going to ask for permission to have my intern here, but we're in open session now, so it's not an issue.

The Chair: The first thing that we need to talk about is our aviation safety report. At the moment, the best that our great analysts are able to do is to pull it together for us so that we will receive it sometime Monday evening. We can't do anything about it because they cannot produce it and get it out of translation before that.

Do you want to speak to it at all?

Mr. Alexandre Lavoie (Committee Researcher): Of course, if we receive it a bit earlier, we'll do our best, but currently it's the plan that we will have it probably around the end of the day. Soon after that you should receive it, unless something goes wrong, but that's the plan right now. I have confirmation from the translators and the people who will edit the documents that it's correct with them, so that's still the time frame, yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): So if I heard correctly, you will get it back Monday by the end of the day?

Mr. Alexandre Lavoie: Yes.

Mrs. Kelly Block: And then you will send it on to us, barring any unforeseen delays, and then we will need to have gone through it and be prepared to discuss it at 11 o'clock on Tuesday morning. That feels a little tight to me, and we're sitting until midnight the night before and probably dealing with a lot of business, and some of us may not have the opportunity to give it the due diligence it deserves after all of the effort that you and translation services will have made. Is the expectation then that we will be prepared to deal with it on Tuesday, or are you suggesting maybe that we get it and then start to deal with it on Thursday?

The Chair: We had allocated the Tuesday to Thursday of next week to be able to go through the draft report and the recommendations.

What is the will of the committee? I recognize the fact that the analysts have told us they can't get it to us before. It is a lot to ask of the committee, given the hours. If we're there until midnight, I guess we could be reading it sometime, but it doesn't seem fair, as Ms. Block has said, to have to handle that.

So what's the will of the committee?

Mr. Aubin, what are your thoughts on that?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): I was just going to say the same thing. It's not ideal, of course, but since Monday, like every other day next week, is going to be a long one, anyway, I will give it a go.

If everyone at the table can look at the report that evening, I suggest we start the work, since we most likely won't get approval Tuesday, anyway. We can still do some groundwork.

I think we can make an exception in this case and speed up our pace to make sure everything we've been working on for weeks doesn't go down the drain. You never know what's around the corner.

• (1110)

[English]

The Chair: Exactly.

Mr. Rayes.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): As I see it, it will all depend on when we get it. You said in the evening, but if I get it after six or seven o'clock, I honestly don't think I'll be able to give my feedback the next day, considering the long hours we've been putting in for nearly two weeks now.

What's more, I don't really feel like making my staff work after hours, Monday night, given all the long hours they've been pulling for a while. I'm not questioning, however, your efforts to get it delivered sooner.

If we can get it at a reasonable time, I would gladly make the effort to spend some time on it Monday evening, but I won't work on it until midnight; that's for sure. In any case, I'm on duty Monday.

Let's not forget the constant votes being called without warning. I don't want the committee to count too much on my contribution. I don't mean it in a negative way; I simply wouldn't hold out too much hope.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Iacono.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Chair, would it at least be possible to get the recommendations a bit sooner? That way, we could at least study the recommendations and focus on that piece Tuesday. After we deal with the recommendations, we could deal with the rest of the report on Thursday.

[English]

The Chair: They're out of translation now.

A voice: Yes, we have them in both languages already, so—

The Chair: That's a possibility. We have the recommendations from translation, and I was going to suggest, with direction from the committee, that we circulate the recommendations as soon as possible anyway so that we have between now and whenever, Tuesday or Thursday, to at least go over those recommendations and familiarize ourselves with them and have a chance to think them through.

Mr. Aubin.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I understand where Mr. Rayes is coming from. I'm wondering whether we could set a cut-off time, and if the report came in before that, we would go ahead and work on it Tuesday. Otherwise, we would put it off until Thursday. Would six o'clock be a time we could all agree on?

In a nutshell, if the report came in before six o'clock, the committee would start looking at it Tuesday; otherwise, it would wait until Thursday.

[English]

The Chair: Yes, otherwise it would go to Thursday. I think we need to leave some flexibility here. If we get it before six, that still doesn't guarantee that the members will have a lot of time to absorb and read it. We can go through it to utilize our two hours. I think we should see when we're maybe going to get it.

Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Chair, what I have to say may help us figure this out. The subcommittee wasn't able to meet to plan out the days and weeks ahead or specifically discuss the motion on the committee's study of Bill C-49, expected in September. Your assistant sent me a proposed schedule for the study of the bill. As we've seen, the stakeholders, namely grain producers out west and railway representatives, are anxious to know what the approach is going to be.

In terms of this study, before discussing the proposed schedule for September—

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Berthold, would—

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes, I'm getting to my point. You'll see why I brought this up.

[English]

The Chair: I'd like to finalize the aviation study direction first, and then we're going to Bill C-49.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes, but you will understand—

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Luc Berthold: —because I want to suggest that we invite the minister next week to talk about Bill C-49 in a prestudy because of the railway thing, the farmers' grain thing. Maybe if the minister can be here on Tuesday, that will let us—

The Chair: That's a good suggestion.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I think we could invite the minister to the prestudy of Bill C-49. We could address some of the issues to the minister that we heard from our constituents and all the stakeholders on that file. We will have to argue about this little part of Bill C-49 really fast, and we know we will not have time to discuss all of C-49 in September. Let's start on this bill next week. That's why it's important to talk about this on Tuesday.

• (1115)

The Chair: If that were possible, yes.

Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I support inviting the minister to come on Tuesday. That would build in the flexibility we're looking for, given the timing of the report we're about to receive. It would perhaps address the sense of urgency that I know my colleague across the way was responding to when he suggested we meet prior to the start of the fall session, and perhaps what I believe to be a very heavy schedule for a week in terms of the testimony we want to hear and given that we need to get names of witnesses in by Wednesday next week. It may be a demonstration to our grain farmers and those folks who have deep concerns about the measures due to sunset on August 1 if we were to bring in the minister to talk about Bill C-49.

We would do that anyway. I'm sure we would kick off a study on Bill C-49 by bringing in the minister and departmental officials, if that could happen before the House rises. Perhaps we could even focus on those measures due to sunset and get testimony from him on that. That could be a good way of addressing both the study being proposed for that time in September and the need to build in the flexibility that we're looking for on the aviation study report.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Iacono.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: We have no objection to inviting the minister. Although we hope he'll be able to make it, if he can't, we'll have to carry on with our work. Either way, we can ask the clerk to invite the minister.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, so it gives us an alternative.

As far as the aviation report is concerned, if we get the report before six o'clock, we will attempt to deal with it on Tuesday. If we don't, hopefully we'll be able to get the minister to come in or someone who can talk to us for a bit of a technical briefing, even if we can't get the minister, but at least we'll do what we can.

On the recommendations for the aviation study, do I have direction from the committee to circulate them in both official languages to the committee members?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. All right, so we know what we're doing with that, and we'll see what we can do to get the minister.

Go ahead, Mr. Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm not sure I understood that, or perhaps there was a problem with the interpretation.

For Tuesday, is the priority the report, if it's available, or are we going to hear from the minister?

[*English*]

The Chair: I think the aviation study needs to be what we're doing. We need to close that off, if we could do it on Tuesday and Thursday. What is the direction of the committee?

Yes, Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Chair, I think the proposal by my colleague was that we plan for the minister to come on Tuesday, given the uncertainty about the report. At least then we will know that we've got something scheduled for Tuesday. If he can't come and all things align and we end up dealing with the report, that's fine, but I think in an effort to have something planned for Tuesday, given the uncertainty, we are proposing that we move ahead with the invitation to the minister for Tuesday, knowing that we'll get that part of the initial study on Bill C-49 done, and then we move to the aviation study report on Thursday, and perhaps into the following week and the next, until we rise.

The Chair: But being realistic, which I always am, once we get into Bill C-49 in the fall, we will be tied up with that for a while. Then we're going to have to go back, and if we don't do some substantial work on the body of the report and the recommendations on the aviation study, we will be going back to the aviation study sometime in the fall. That's a long time since when we heard the testimony, and so on.

If the minister were to come, he probably would only be here for an hour, so that would leave us one hour—

• (1120)

Mrs. Kelly Block: With departmental officials.

The Chair: Right.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, if it's possible to get the recommendations, as was said earlier, I don't think we should spend a lot of meetings on the aviation safety report, given how the study was done. We, too, hope to be able to submit our recommendations quickly. As far as the official opposition is concerned, it should be possible to deal with the incoming report fairly quickly.

In two hours next week, the committee can do a lot of work, especially on Thursday. I think two hours is enough time to consider the report and make recommendations so we can get it adopted.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Right now, no one is more torn than I am over these two proposals.

There is absolutely no question that we have to hear from the minister on Bill C-49. It seems to me that it will be a lot more complicated to get him here in September, given that the House will not be back yet and he'll likely be travelling all over the country.

I'd like to know whether my Conservative colleagues want the full two hours on Tuesday or prefer to spend an hour with the minister and meet with department officials in September.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I think, given the size of this bill and the various modes that are covered, I would prefer to see him with his departmental officials for the two hours. I think that makes the most sense, kicking off such a large study.

I'll leave it at that.

The Chair: We can certainly put out that opportunity and that request, whether or not that's possible.

If we were able to get the minister on Tuesday for the first hour, and if we could spend the second hour on the aviation study, we could at least get it started and go back to the aviation study and hopefully finish it off on the Thursday, and this way we'll have closed off that particular part.

The minister is planning to be available in September when we start the study. The minister and the officials will be, as they are with every study, our first people up, I expect, from that perspective. How about if we, on this one....

Is there any—

Mrs. Kelly Block: Am I on the list?

The Chair: You were, and you were off, and you're back on. Go right ahead.

Remember this is—

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

We have four more meetings.

The Chair: We have two next week and two the following week.

Mrs. Kelly Block: We definitely do have time to deal with the aviation study in the three meetings that would follow a meeting with the minister and his departmental officials. Again, for the purposes of having something on the schedule, not knowing whether or not we're going to be able to deal with the report on Tuesday, I think this makes the most sense given the sense of urgency that I know we are feeling based on what we are hearing back from our producers and other stakeholders with regard to Bill C-49—at least with regard to those measures that are due to sunset in August.

I can't stress enough how much I really do think we should go ahead with that initial meeting with the minister and his departmental officials on Tuesday and look at spending the rest of this session closing the loop on the aviation study until we rise on the 23rd.

• (1125)

The Chair: We don't know that we will be here until the 23rd, and I think any of the members who have been here for some time know that once a lot of legislation gets through very quickly, the House can decide it's going to shut down. Especially in those last two meetings, which would have been on the Tuesday and the Thursday if we were to go to the 23rd, knowing the way the House functions—it's up and down and we're here and we have votes—it becomes pretty erratic, so I don't know that we'd get anything done those last two weeks.

I'm going to put the suggestion on the floor that we—

Sorry, Mr. Iacono.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: We're dealing with a lot of uncertainty here. We don't know if the minister is available for an hour or two hours. We don't know if the report is going to be ready on Tuesday. We have agreed to having the minister come. Let him tell us if his availability is for an hour or two, and at the same time we'll also have to decide if we have time to start on Tuesday, whether or not the report is ready. We have the recommendations as I suggested, so I think everything is on the table, and I guess we'll have to wait for these gentlemen to finish their work and for the minister to respond, and we have no objection to that.

We need to be able to be clear so that there is no misunderstanding next week, because, as my colleague was saying, there are a lot of discussions. I agree with him. He is confused, and so am I, so we want to just clarify that. We have to ask the minister to see if he's available to come, and if he's not, then we're going to go back to the original plan, which was to look at the recommendations or the report, whichever of the two is ready to start as of Tuesday.

I'll also be clear that, if the drafting has been sent to us before 6 o'clock, as you mentioned, then we can resume that on Tuesday, if the minister is not available to come on Tuesday.

Is that clear?

The Chair: Is everybody okay with that?

Is the clerk clear on that?

Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Madam Chair.

To signal our interest and extend a formal invitation to the minister, I move that the committee formally invite the minister to appear in order to discuss Bill C-49.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's fine. Have you given us notice prior to—

Mr. Luc Berthold: No. We are in committee business—

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Luc Berthold: —so we don't need a motion.

The Chair: Yes, we do.

Mr. Luc Berthold: In committee business?

The Chair: I am informed by our clerk that we do.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Is it the will of all the members of the committee to agree to invite the minister for Tuesday?

The Chair: I believe we just—

Mr. Angelo Iacono: I think we were clear in our agreement, so I don't think we really need to go to a motion. We too want to have the minister here to clarify stuff. As the chair has mentioned, the minister is going to be here also in September. We too want to have him here.

Mr. Luc Berthold: That was just to formalize it, but that's okay.

The Chair: It's all right.

Mr. Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I just want to make sure I understand correctly.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robert Aubin: Before discussing the motion, we had what I saw as a gentleman's agreement. I'm not sure whether the motion mentions one or two hours for the minister's appearance or whether it gives us the same flexibility as the one we had before.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: There's not much point to the motion since we all agree on inviting the minister.

Mr. Robert Aubin: But are we going to spend one or two hours with him? What's next?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair—

Mr. Angelo Iacono: I don't think it's up to us to decide. We'd certainly like to have him for two hours, but if he's not available—

Mr. Robert Aubin: No, no, I understand. I didn't read the motion, so I don't know whether it mentions how long.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, since I didn't get unanimous consent to propose and discuss my motion, there's no longer a motion.

Voices: Oh, oh!

[*English*]

The Chair: All right.

At the moment, we've asked the clerk to reach out to the minister and his officials as soon as possible to see if it's possible for them to come on Tuesday. Then on Thursday, we will deal with our aviation report. If the minister and officials are not available on Tuesday, we will attempt to do what we can with that report if we receive it before 6 p.m. The clerk will circulate the recommendations from all parties in both official languages so that you're fully versed on those.

Do we have agreement on that?

Okay.

Mr. Vance Badawey: I thought I had my hand up.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I think I crossed you off three times.

Mr. Vance Badawey: That's fine. I'm getting used to it.

The Chair: No disrespect was meant.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's just a question, and I just want to clarify—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Oh, no, there was something else.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Soup and blanket at 11, guys, okay?

Mr. Vance Badawey: When the minister comes out, is your expectation that he will talk about Bill C-49?

An hon. member: Yes.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Okay, that's all I needed to know.

Mr. Luc Berthold: That's what we discussed.

Mr. Vance Badawey: It's going to happen.

The Chair: Mr. Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Your recap was almost perfect, but there's still one question I didn't get an answer to. If we don't get the report by six o'clock, will we begin discussing the recommendations or another subject?

[*English*]

The Chair: What's the will of the committee? If we don't have the minister coming, do you want to at least deal with recommendations? Otherwise, we won't have a meeting.

• (1130)

Mr. Angelo Iacono: That's what I had proposed. That's what I had said before. It was either the report or the recommendations, so that we don't waste any time.

The Chair: Yes, so then we—

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Or the minister. Hypothetically, we have—

The Chair: We can at least deal with the recommendations if the minister and his staff are not available Tuesday.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Chair, let's look at this realistically. We're going to have either recommendations or a report to deal with. My question is for the analysts.

What are your thoughts? Are you going to have this report to us?

Mr. Alexandre Lavoie: We're still on schedule for Monday at end of the day.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Okay, so that's your schedule.

I'm assuming, because you guys are great, that you are going to have these reports to us.

Mr. Alexandre Lavoie: It's up to the translator at this point. Our job is done.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Okay, so we can have this report. We'll get the report, or if we don't get the report, which would be an anomaly for you guys because you usually stick by your schedule with much discipline, then we'll be looking at the actual recommendations.

The Chair: We can at least go over the recommendations.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Okay, great.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: When you say, "Go over the recommendations," I think it will be interesting to go over them if we don't have a report in hand to sort of refer back to the testimony. We have often had discussions when we're trying to—I guess—consider what the recommendations are actually trying to address.

If members think we can just have recommendations in front of us since we may not have the report, I just don't know how that works. I guess that if that's what we're left with, that's what we're left with.

The Chair: We'll certainly have the report Monday evening. It's a question of how much of it we are able to read through and absorb, and so on and so forth.

As mentioned, let's push for the minister and officials to come. If they can't, we know we're going to be dealing to some extent with the aviation study. We'll do the best we can. If we find it too frustrating, then we'll just do the best we can to get as much done as we can from that avenue.

We're now going to move on to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: We need to talk about Mr. Bratina's—

Mr. Luc Berthold: You don't want me to reach out?

The Chair: No.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: We're going to talk about Mr. Bratina's motion. We had as a committee agreed to two meetings, and whatever day that was last week, on Tuesday, it was suggested that we use the time, the four extra meetings that we are going to have on smart communities and infrastructure, to also talk about water quality and so on. But at the end of the day, there will need to be two reports, so what's your suggestion, Mr. Badawey?

Mr. Vance Badawey: I guess I have the advantage of having folks here. I'm not sure about Mr. Aubin, but many of us have sat on municipal councils in the past, and have had the opportunity for many years to put together a layered process that brings us to a point of smart investments.

I'll preface my comments by saying this, Madam Chair. Right now you have many announcements that both Minister Sohi and Minister Garneau are making that align, quite frankly, very much with what we're hearing from different mayors across the country, big and small cities, but especially from the small to medium-sized cities, with respect to the need for infrastructure dollars. That's the "what", by the way. That's the "what", the creation of a community improvement/growth plan.

The next layer then is, "Okay, what's part of that plan?"

When we look at underground, we look at water, sewer pipes; when we look at on-ground, we look at roads, sidewalks, parks. Then you get to the more appealing investments such as the beautification of downtowns, and the list goes on.

As former mayors, we all get that.

Having said that, now we have to get to the "how" we are going to make those investments. The "how", as announced by Minister Sohi, is technology and innovation. Instead of the traditional lights, go with LEDs. Instead of having five wastewater plants that run themselves, put a SCADA system in place so that one system runs five different plants, and the lists go on. That's the next layer.

Then after that, I can foresee the committee starting to discuss the alignment of the economic side of investing in infrastructure. That being, for example, in Mr. Berthold's constituency, rail and how we can possibly look at future investments that can economically benefit your constituency that might have a niche or a strength with respect to transportation when it comes to rail. In my constituency, it's the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Welland Canal. You can see how it widens.

Lastly is the most recent announcement by Minister Bains when it comes to superclusters. Now we look at our areas and this is how it widens now; and this is having a vision to then make proper investments for better returns in a wider area, those returns being economic, social, and environmental.

Now we talk about the superclusters, and how the smart cities initiative, the investments made, a more efficient and effective way of doing business—the "what", the "how"—can actually create more economic development opportunities based on superclusters, that being not just business, but also the infrastructure that attaches that business; hence, the reason the business is there in the first place.

If you follow me, you can see that the process starts here and gets bigger and bigger and bigger, but ultimately what it does is two things. One, I'll use the word "encourages"; it encourages a discipline to start making investments that create better returns. Secondly, it also disciplines that those investments be attached with asset management and therefore proper financing, and therefore not saddling future generations with infrastructure deficits or debts, as we today are. I'm sure you have pipes in your city that are 80 years old. That shouldn't be the case for the next generation.

I know I'm running through this in a short way so I won't talk too long, but at the end of the day I'm hoping you can see the vision with respect to the process of the smart cities initiative that we're going to start on, and how it relates and aligns with what we are doing as a committee. Equally as important—and you may not like this, but with all due respect, it is what it is—it aligns with the direction that we're taking as a country, as a government, with respect to trade, transportation, job creation and, ultimately, investing in infrastructure and ensuring that those investments are attached to returns on those investments.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1135)

The Chair: Going back to Mr. Bratina's motion, do we want to—

Mr. Vance Badawey: That's part of it.

The Chair: At the end of the day, we'll have to have a separate report referencing Mr. Bratina's motion, so you want to wait and not do any further work on Mr. Bratina's motion. We'll incorporate it into the work we're going to do on smart communities when we have FCM and other folks here as part of our questioning on what cities are doing with their lead pipes and so on and so forth. It's an opportunity to flag it and profile it, but at the end of the day we need to do two separate reports that reference back—

Mr. Vance Badawey: It's part of those investments, those smart city investments, to get rid of lead pipes.

The Chair: All right, we'll go to Ms. Block, then Mr. Rayes.

Mrs. Kelly Block: In the meantime, because we chose to take an hour to discuss Mr. Bratina's motion, what's the process now? Do we report it back to the House? What do we report back to the House? I assume it would get put on the schedule at some point in time, to be voted on.

The Chair: We have until December 1 to report back, so the idea is to utilize the time we're working on smart communities to do some questioning as well on Mr. Bratina's motion, but at the end of the day the analyst would do two clear reports back to the House.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Then I concur with Mr. Badawey and think that we can deal with it in the fall.

The Chair: All right.

Go ahead, Mr. Rayes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: I agree that there's no rush to deal with the matter, but does it have to be included? That's a question I think we should ask ourselves.

I realize that it's tied to infrastructure, but as far as smart cities are concerned, it's more a matter of infrastructure management. Perhaps we could mention the piping, the way it is managed, and the need to know what the current inventory is. From the comments we heard, we learned that we have no idea as to the inventory across the country, so I don't think using this element as an example poses a problem.

What I wonder about, though, is the reason for incorporating the motion into our study on smart cities. We could simply include all the elements affecting all cities and mention that particular aspect. Does the issue merit a report? I don't really have an opinion on that yet.

• (1140)

[English]

The Chair: Okay, M. Aubin.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I'd like to pick up on what Mr. Rayes said.

Nothing I have heard so far during the smart communities study would suggest a clear connection between that and Mr. Bratina's motion.

That said, we still have four meetings to go, so I'm not closing the door on the idea. If, however, we want to merge the two files, it would probably be beneficial to find a witness—if such a witness exists—who could tell the committee how their municipality's water system has a smart component and explain how the connected software runs the system, ensures water quality, manages failures, and so forth.

At this stage in the game, I find it tough to connect the two, but we can think about it. If that's what we want to do, I think we should find a witness who can speak to that.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Rayes.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: I agree with my colleague's sage advice. I think we can hold off on deciding whether to include it in the report. You just said we have until December. That gives us enough time to think about it. Let's not rule out the possibility. I just think we should wait to hear what the witnesses have to say during the next four days of meetings in order to figure out whether we really can connect the two in a meaningful way. I think we can work towards that. We shall see.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, thank you. That's a good idea between them all.

Yes, Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: With respect to what Bob's coming forward with, quite frankly that's something we can discuss and debate, but it's not up to us, and it's twofold. One thing is that it's becoming a request from the municipalities, because there is a gap there to look after these laterals. Therefore, point number two is that it's up to municipalities if they want to fund those laterals. It's not our decision.

Sorry, guys, I don't mean to offend you, but it's not your decision.

Mrs. Kelly Block: It's the House's decision.

Mr. Vance Badawey: If I may, I have the floor, Ms. Block. Thank you.

What I'm getting at—and this is why I want to roll out the community investment plans—is that you're actually putting a funding envelope in place that's will help fund something that's been

established by the municipalities, which is their decision. What they then do with that money or prioritize doing with it is up to them, and if they happen to take a funding envelope, as a municipality, because they know best....

Sorry, guys, it's not you. They, as municipalities know best.

The Chair: “We....”

Mr. Vance Badawey: Sorry, it's not “we”, but “they” who know best. And we are empowering them to make those decisions. That's the whole crux of the infrastructure funding. If they happen to make a decision that they want to take a certain funding envelope under a smart cities initiative—which it aligns with, by the way—and put it toward collaterals, that's their call, not ours.

Thank you.

The Chair: I didn't get that we were going to be dictating to anyone. The question was how to deal with Mr. Bratina's motion.

Mr. Rayes said he didn't quite see where the direct connections were but we should go along with our four extra meetings and then figure it out at the end of that, because we still have to do two separate reports.

Mrs. Block, go ahead.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I do not understand the intervention by Mr. Badawey, because there was support to include the content of Mr. Bratina's motion into his smart cities study, but the House will definitely vote on Mr. Bratina's motion. It's not about anybody deciding anything. It's about the fact that a motion that's been put on the order of precedence has been studied by a committee and will now go back to the House and be voted on.

My intervention was simply to find out when that needs to happen and how it is reported back to the House. I think you've completely misunderstood the intervention.

• (1145)

The Chair: That does happen sometimes.

Mr. Berthold, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Ms. Block just beat me to the punch. We have to report back to the House on Mr. Bratina's motion. I think agreeing to discuss the motion as part of another study would show the committee's willingness to be co-operative. I have no problem with that.

[English]

The Chair: That's great.

Mr. Rayes, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: I agree with my two colleagues. I have no objection to that idea. What we will need to think about during the next four meetings on smart communities is whether to deal with it fully in that report, merely take it into account, or devote another report to it.

We have no problem discussing that. I see no reason why anyone would think the opposite.

[English]

The Chair: The direction from the clerk is that ultimately it has to be a separate report to the House. We can gain information as we move forward and incorporate it, which is what I think we are all saying we want to do.

Mr. Hardie, go ahead.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Congratulations to my friends across for the shocking amount of clarity. It's very good. Yes, you are correct—

An hon. member: It's always done with clarity.

The Chair: I know. We have the best committee on the Hill.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ken Hardie: We do.

I do want though to turn our attention to the whole issue of what we're talking about with smart cities. So far we've heard of a lot of gee whiz technology, cars that can go sideways and all kinds of stuff, but what we really have an opportunity to do here is to then start to see how this is applied to cities in a way that not only makes those cities work better, but at the same time particularly complements the infrastructure investments the government is prepared to make in those cities. Using superclusters as an example, we could designate a supercluster in Elk's Mistake, Saskatchewan, if we wanted to, but if they have dial-up Internet service there, we're going to have a problem.

As we go forward and think about this, let's see where we take our cities because some cities are not ready to be smart yet. They are perhaps intelligent and have the potential, but what can we do in our study of smart cities that will help those cities align their planning and their investments to make them ready for the bigger investments that could come? What can we do through the current infrastructure program to help them with that alignment to get them prepared to take the next step into, if you like, the smart city sphere?

I've had the benefit of working very closely with the regional plan in Metro Vancouver, which has a long history that goes back the better part of 50 years of really sound decisions that positioned Metro Vancouver to take advantage of things like the gateway program, which opened up access to our ports. To make that kind of gateway investment in a city that's not ready, that doesn't have the complementary systems in place, is a waste of opportunity and quite possibly a waste of money.

We have an opportunity with the smart cities to take a step back and look at some of those fundamentals that need to be in place for a city to move to the level of being a smart city, and for a city to take full advantage of what could be significant infrastructure investments. My group and I have put together a list of witnesses we could bring in who can speak to the experience in Metro Vancouver, and it probably could be enhanced by the experiences we've had in the regions where we come from.

The Chair: Mr. Rayes.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Thank you, Madam Chair.

With all due respect to the committee members and the study on smart communities, I think we can bring in all kinds of witnesses to

hear about their experiences. We have heard from many, and heaven knows how important the subject is, but the priority, even before we start thinking about smart cities, should be on hearing from communities that do not currently have access to fibre optics, that do not have access to the technology. As things stand, multiple regions across the country simply do not have access to it.

The minister has all the necessary authority in that regard and makes his infrastructure choices. The government announced a \$180-billion plan and says that the infrastructure bank is coming soon. We should know a bit more. Perhaps the bank could even support Canada-wide projects aimed at getting everyone connected.

At the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' annual conference last week, we learned that the federal government intends to hold a smart cities challenge, so the government already seems to have a clear sense of what it wants to do on that front.

I think the people the committee should hear from are those who do not have that access. What should the government do? What should the committee recommend to the Department of Finance and the government to make this an essential service that is accessible to everyone?

That said, I'm not trying to take anything away from the rest of it, but, as the expression goes, we're putting the cart before the horse. It's urgent that we get everyone across the country connected, no matter where they live. That is what we need to build on in order to help all municipalities.

Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto, in short, all the big cities, have been working on this for a long time now, believe me. For years, municipal associations have been meeting with experts from all over the world to get advice on best practices. They are already active, they know the programs, they know which doors to knock on for the funding to carry out these projects. They don't need a challenge.

We aren't the ones in the lead; I would even say we're behind them. They are already ahead of us.

We need to give this serious consideration. We need to find witnesses who will make the recommendations that will help the government, so it can make the right decisions to ensure everyone is connected.

That is my humble opinion, anyway. Otherwise, it will simply be a waste of time.

• (1150)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Badawey's motion is on infrastructure and smart communities. Communities means large and small. We keep saying "cities", but the reference is to communities, which is good because it includes small communities that are struggling as well, I think, given your point.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, I just want to clarify something.

I don't oppose Mr. Badawey's motion. In fact, I completely agree that we work on it. My point is simply this: if I had any sway over the witness list, I would encourage the committee to learn as much as it could to figure out how to get communities connected. We could work with private companies—who are willing to work with the government—to put it all together.

I want to make myself perfectly clear: I am not at all against this motion. I, too, have a municipal background. Before we hear from Vancouver and Montreal officials on what their cities are already doing, we should, instead, look at how we can get everyone connected so that we can all make progress.

Believe me, the big cities are already working on it; they don't need us in order to think about it. They have their own experts, advisors, and lobbies looking after them. I just wanted to clarify that I am not at all opposed to this motion.

[English]

The Chair: That's fair enough; agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: I want to clarify that I am not against it, just so we're all clear.

[English]

The Chair: I mentioned the other day that we need to get our witness list for this study on smart cities by June 14, so we will have it by the time we get to this.

Okay, Ms. Block, I have a list here. Hold on.

Then we need to move on to Bill C-49.

Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Mr. Rayes, I agree 100%. We want to get the right witnesses in here. We want to talk about those issues and, quite frankly, that's what this process is for.

As an example, in my former life, fibre was an issue in our area. We dealt with it by leveraging expertise as well as finances to put fibre into our area. We created our municipal company that had shareholders. We took a company that we invested \$300,000 in. I know my little city sold its shares for \$7.5 million 10 years later, so it was a pretty good investment and we got the hard infrastructure in.

The second part of it, and this goes to Mr. Rayes's concern, is equity with respect to access to infrastructure—and this goes to Mr. Bratina's motion as well—whether it be fibre, clean water, roads, which then create that quality of life and equality. It creates that economic development, equality, and that social equality.

Mr. Rayes is saying exactly what this is going to do. It's going to be a layered effect. We're going to discuss, listen, and learn on a daily basis from those in the business—more so than the municipalities.

The second part of it is, and the last comment I want to make is—and the mayors know this—that the wants and needs are very expensive, so to be able to achieve that equality, we're going to have to create some pretty creative partnerships.

In my former life we did that and were very successful in taking \$7 million and creating \$50 million, and a lot of that will be by

working with the private sector vis-à-vis the infrastructure bank. When you look at the infrastructure bank, that's what it will be doing; it will be giving us that. It's an enabler that will give us the ability to leverage dollars to then invest in our communities to create that equality with respect to that triple bottom line: social, environmental, and economic.

The best thing it's going to do is not to saddle the next generation with that infrastructure debt or deficit, as has been the case with our generation. It's going to be dealt with by leveraging and taking care of those investments and getting better returns.

●(1155)

The Chair: Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: This is just a quick reflection. As we look at our witness list, it may be instructive to go to people who've experienced what happens when all of a sudden their service levels are lifted to good places.

I was with the fisheries and oceans committee last week in the far north: in Inuvik, Paulatuk, and Tuktoyaktuk. Their Internet service up there is probably leagues better than most of the rural areas in Canada. They have four bars on their cell phones all the time. If we talk to them, I'm sure they're going to tell us not just about the hard dollars and cents values of having that kind of access to the rest of the world, but the social and cultural value, and all the rest of those things.

I think this will help us cover the monetary and non-monetary benefits of moving cities toward being smart, because there are some significant benefits when you make those kinds of investments that I'm sure a lot of folks at this table would like to see happen in their homes.

The Chair: Mr. Iacono.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: I just want to bring back—

[Translation]

Last week, we discussed my colleague's motion. I had a problem with the wording in the French version, specifically, the phrase *l'aménagement des terres*, which I propose be replaced with *l'aménagement des territoires*.

Is that the right term? It would be more in line with the English version.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm finding it interesting that we are going into such detail about a study that we don't have on the calendar yet. I'm thinking it probably won't get on the calendar until sometime in late September or early October given that we don't know if we're going to get through our aviation study by the end of this session, and given that we have a schedule before us that's going to see us sitting for four days before the session even starts, for a total of 20-some hours, on Bill C-49. We're then going to have to report that back to the House, and yet we're going into great detail about a study that we don't even have on the calendar yet. I recognize that you've asked for witnesses by June 14. When do you want the witnesses for Bill C-49 in?

The Chair: We're going to have that in the next discussion, once we close off the discussion on this one, which I think we have now talked about enough. August 1 was the suggested date, but we'll go into Bill C-49 and see what the committee suggests.

At the moment that's what we have decided, so we can get any of the suggested witnesses in by June 14, so that the clerk has them when the time allows for us to move into that particular study.

Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Just to clarify Mrs. Block's concern, a lot of this discussion actually came from Mr. Rayes's question at the last meeting with respect to clarification on the smart cities motion. From what I understood at least, he wanted to recognize what the substance, the guts of that, was going to be. I had asked the chair to bring it up today so we could all discuss it and get some thoughts on the direction being taken.

A lot of that, Kelly, is due to the fact that we all come from the same background. We've all been there trying to struggle with these challenges, so we can get somewhat of a blueprint so we can move forward, especially when it comes to establishing witnesses.

• (1200)

The Chair: Okay, we've had enough discussion on that one, and I think we all know what the intent was.

Oh, wait a minute. Mr. Rayes is the last person to comment before we move to our Bill C-49 discussion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: On what was just said, I don't know that we should rush to hear from witnesses as soon as June 14, since we won't be studying the subject until after the summer break, during which we'll all be in our respective ridings. Perhaps we could allow a

month to propose witnesses. That would give plenty of time to contact them. That might help us, on our end, do a better job.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Rayes—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: It's a suggestion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Rayes is suggesting that rather than having the witness list in by June 14, we postpone that to July 14. Is that correct, Mr. Rayes?

Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, I suggest we keep the witness list open. As you know, everything involving technology moves fast. For that reason, I think we could have a basic list of witnesses in by July 14, but we should keep it open so that we could add others and not completely rule out everyone else.

[*English*]

The Chair: Now, with respect to Bill C-49—

Mr. Badawey, is that on infrastructure?

Mr. Vance Badawey: No.

The Chair: I think we have the points on the floor regarding where we're going on the infrastructure.

Mr. Vance Badawey: You know what they say about assuming, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I know, but I try.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Are we going to discuss Bill C-49?

The Chair: We are now talking about Bill C-49.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Should we go into closed session, Madam Chair?

The Chair: We are in open session.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Can we go into closed session, Madam Chair?

The Chair: You are moving that we go into closed session.

(Motion agreed to)

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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