



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri- Food

AGRI • NUMBER 090 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

—
Chair

Mr. Pat Finnigan

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

• (1300)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.)): I want to welcome everyone to this special meeting in early March.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), four members of this committee have requested a meeting to discuss their request to invite grain producers and officials to provide an update on systemic issues in Canadian grain movement, the backlog of grain shipments, railway delays and fulfillment performance in order to improve grain shipment along the value chain.

I will open the meeting.

Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Also want to sincerely thank my colleagues who agreed to set aside a few hours during their week off to be here. It shows the importance of this issue not only for members, but also for western grain producers who are facing a major crisis.

I would like to move the following motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food immediately invite grain producers to provide an urgent update to the Committee on systemic issues in Canadian rail transportation and the backlog of grain shipments, given that grain farmers are facing costs incurred on unfulfilled orders, and given that delays compromise Canada's competitiveness in export markets; and that the Committee invite officials from CP and CN to provide an explanation on railway delays and fulfillment performance in order to improve grain shipment along the value chain.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

[English]

You've all heard the motion.

[Translation]

Are there any comments on this?

Mr. Berthold, go ahead.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The committee's Conservative and NDP members called for this emergency meeting because farmers need the government to take

action now. We are united in our willingness to find immediate and long-term solutions. I am convinced that the committee's Liberal members also have the willingness to find a solution.

The situation is disastrous. When the government began an ideological battle by introducing Bill C-49, an omnibus bill from the Minister of Transport, all the observers warned it of the dangers of a new crisis.

We have all seen the figures. Between the two of them, CN and CP fulfilled 32% of hopper car orders last week. CN fulfilled 17% of the orders, and CP fulfilled 50% of them. Combined, last week marked the worst performance so far for the 2017-18 crop year.

Farmers are forced to absorb demurrage fees. We don't often use that term. I will give the definition of "demurrage", for those who are not used to hearing that word. Demurrage fees must be paid by the charterer to the ship owner, in a voyage charter, when the time it takes to load or unload exceeds the laytime set out in the voyage contract. It's good to use the proper term.

In order words, the grain remains in elevators.

[English]

We learned that there are 35 vessels in the Port of Vancouver, we think for grain. Another five are waiting in Prince Rupert. With every unfulfilled order, Canada's reputation as a reliable trading partner is taking a hit. To quote an editorial:

Increasingly, our reputation among global customers is that of a supplier with aging and inadequate transportation infrastructure which fails to deliver its products on time, whether it's canola or crude.

This has very real implications at a time when we want to expand market access, maximize our crops' yield, and increase our exports.

[Translation]

Every unfulfilled order undermines the reputation of reliable partners for Canada.

Unfortunately, the Liberals have ignored our advice to pass a separate bill on grain transportation and have not extended or made permanent the provisions of the Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act. So protection for grain producers disappeared on August 1, 2017. Consequently, as predicted by the official opposition and a number of observers, a crisis occurred. It did not take two years; the first winter following the end of protection ensured by Bill C-30, a crisis situation arose in grain transportation.

Allow me to read a few excerpts of comments made on June 5, 2017, at second reading of Bill C-49, since that's pretty important.

My colleague Kelly Block, who is the transportation minister within our shadow cabinet, took the floor to speak to this omnibus bill. If people are still unsure that it is indeed an omnibus bill, here is how Minister Garneau himself described it, on June 5, 2017:

Specifically, the bill proposes to strengthen air passenger rights; liberalize international ownership restrictions for Canadian air carriers; develop a clear and predictable process for approval of airline joint ventures; improve access, transparency, efficiency, and sustainable long-term investment in the freight rail sector; and, increase the safety of transportation in Canada by requiring railways to install voice and video recorders in locomotives.

That is how the minister, himself, described Bill C-49. You will understand that we are far from Bill C-30, which focused only on grain transportation.

That is one of the reasons why the consideration of Bill C-49 is taking so long: the government wanted to make an omnibus bill focusing on several different topics and concerning a number of stakeholders. It was clear that its consideration would take time.

My colleague Mrs. Block reiterated the following, during the study of Bill C-49, at second reading:

Furthermore, when I introduced a motion in transport committee last week calling on the committee to write to the Minister of Transport and his government House leader to ask them to split the bill into the following sections, rail shipping, rail safety, air, and marine, to provide an enhanced and possibly expedited scrutiny, every single Liberal member voted against it without even a single comment as to why.

In short, on June 5, 2017, we had already asked that Bill C-49 be split, so that we could study the protection of western grain producers more quickly.

The Conservatives responded positively to the request of their Liberal colleagues from the transport committee to expedite the study of Bill C-49. The Conservatives agreed to return to committee a week before Parliament resumed. NDP members were also in attendance. If I remember correctly, they were also fully prepared to review the bill and to dedicate a whole week to that study in order to expedite the process. After the summer break, all the committee members came here and spent a week discussing Bill C-49. We knew it was important.

However, there was a major issue. When we were studying Bill C-49, the provisions in Bill C-30 had already expired nearly two months before. So the protection was already gone. Those are the arguments my colleague Kelly Block reiterated when the committee studied Bill C-49.

Let me draw your attention to another excerpt from Mrs. Block's comments:

In the fall of 2016, the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities undertook a study of Bill C-30 and held a number of meetings on the merits of these measures and whether they should be allowed to sunset. We were assured that if we lived with this extension, these issues would be dealt with by August 1, 2017.

Unfortunately, the government did not keep its word. It did not ensure that those provisions would be dealt with by August 1, 2017.

Mrs. Block concluded her comments with the following:

In conclusion, this much is certain: the key measures in Bill C-30 will be allowed to sunset on August 1, before this legislation receives royal assent. The Liberals have had nearly a full year to get new legislation in place but failed to do so, and shippers will suffer the consequences.

On June 5, 2017, she predicted that this would happen. Unfortunately, we are now facing that situation.

The Liberal government and railway companies have been inactive since August. It was business as usual for everyone. It was only yesterday that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food bothered to take the first step to resolve the crisis: he wrote a letter with the Minister of Transport asking railway companies to prepare a plan to resolve the crisis and to post that plan on their websites by March 15. However, since the consequences of this crisis are being felt every day, last week we asked the government to act now, to implement the necessary tools and use its power to resolve this crisis as quickly as possible.

It seems that the calling of this emergency meeting had the positive effect of getting things moving. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has at least written a letter. This is a step in the right direction, but we have to go much further. We were expecting the minister to call a Cabinet meeting to adopt measures and make things happen, so that this crisis would be resolved immediately. The presentation of a plan and measures to ultimately find a solution should not be endlessly postponed again. The crisis is happening now.

This leads us to conclude that the government, aside from this letter, is once again relying on luck and the good faith of railway companies, instead of taking action and implementing the necessary measures to ensure that grain is shipped to markets, that farmers are paid and that this season's exceptional crop yields would not be compromised owing to a lack of planning by those who have the power and the tools to take action.

It's simple: the Liberal government must take immediate action to address the backlog in grain delivery and provide the tools needed to hold railway companies accountable for inadequate services. Inaction is costly. Talk to the president and chief executive officer of CN about that, as he lost his job because CN had not managed to provide a quality service. CN clearly indicates in its press release that it fired its president and chief executive officer for that reason.

If CN has realized that it should have taken action earlier, I don't understand how none of the advisors and other employees who are working at the offices of the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food saw this crisis coming. Will a minister have to be fired for inaction—

• (1310)

The Chair: Just a moment, Mr. Berthold. I was just told that there is no sound for the meeting on ParlVU. So I propose that we take a break for a few minutes to try to resolve this technical problem.

Mr. Luc Berthold: No problem, Mr. Chair. That will give me a chance to take a sip of coffee.

•(1310) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1310)

[*English*]

The Chair: We're back in session. The problem has apparently been fixed.

Go ahead, Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I was at the end of my introduction.

As I was saying, the federal government must act right away. We cannot wait one or two weeks. The Liberal government must take immediate action. It has the means and the capacity to take action to ensure that this is working.

As I was saying, one of the two railway companies in question, CN, fired its president and chief executive officer owing to his inaction and the lack of services, according to the CN press release. There is a true crisis happening. People from the offices of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Transport should take note of what just happened at CN and understand the seriousness of the crisis and the urgent need for action.

I have also taken note of the apologies issued this morning by CN. That is an action I want to commend. CN recognized that it had failed to fulfill its duties in the case. Allow me to quote a few excerpts from the CN press release:

“We apologize for not meeting the expectations of our grain customers, nor our own high standards,” [Interim President and Chief Executive Officer] Mr. Ruest said. “The entire CN team has a sense of urgency and is fully focused on getting it right for farmers and our grain customers, regaining the confidence of Canadians businesses, and protecting Canada's reputation as a stable trade partner in world markets.”

CN decided to take action. All this is probably a consequence of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's arrival in Ottawa last week, of the press conference held by western grain farmers and of the convening, thanks to our initiative, of this emergency committee meeting. When we invest all our energy in something and work together, we can achieve results. However, the committee has few means at its disposal. It has to rely on the decision of the government and the cabinet to expedite the process. That is what we want.

Time is of the essence; we called for this emergency meeting to recognize and resolve the worst backlog in a number of years in grain shipping.

Everyone here is aware that this is happening at a time when an ambitious export objective has been set—\$75 billion by 2025. That figure comes from the Barton report. A study has even been undertaken to figure out how technological innovation can be used to achieve that export objective. Logically speaking, without an adequate transportation infrastructure and with companies being unable to send Canadian grain to markets, we will never reach that ambitious objective.

That is why it is important for us to talk about it. The committee should take note of this and hear what producers and railway

companies have to say about the current situation in order to find a medium and long-term solution.

I repeat that, in the short term, the solution is in the hands of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

The crop yield was very good this year. Farmers should not be punished for successfully increasing their production. However, they are literally paying the price of increased productivity because they cannot ship their product.

Right now, when we are trying to increase our access to markets, not being able to perform on contracts in a reliable and timely manner goes in the opposite direction of the one we want to take. There is a lot of volatility around access to markets, specifically given the renegotiation of NAFTA, but also the unexpected tariff increase on Canadian products in markets where Canada would like to expand, especially India.

Those situations are beyond our control; we cannot do anything about them. We have no decision-making power in what is happening abroad. However, we have a way to do something about our grain transportation system, as we are the ones who control it. We do not depend on other countries for that. It is up to us to implement appropriate measures to ensure that our grain is shipped to foreign markets. We have to implement everything to ensure that Canadian farmers have access to a logistical system that delivers their products to markets in a predictable and timely manner.

Todd Lewis, President of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, said that his year's shipments are disastrous and that we cannot allow ourselves another similar year.

Daryl Fransoo, Director of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, said that a crisis is happening right now. The levels are astronomically bad. Farmers are getting together and trying to do something.

Wade Sobkowich, Executive Director of the Western Grain Elevator Association, said that the situation was not improving, but rather getting worse.

Art Enns, Vice-President of Grain Growers of Canada said that this situation is unacceptable and must change.

•(1315)

Finally, the Premier of Saskatchewan, Scott Moe, said the following:

[*English*]

“We need the grain moving.”

I quote: “We need it moving sooner rather than later,” Moe said, warning there “is a cash crunch that is coming.”

[*Translation*]

We will certainly have the opportunity to talk about that. Transportation and shipments are being discussed a lot, but let's not forget the producers who cannot be paid because they cannot ship their grain to market. This is a disaster for many farmers in the west.

The grain crisis of 2013-14 cost the Canadian economy \$8 billion. This loss affects not only the farmers, although they do bear the brunt. It is also a direct loss to our economy.

There are reports indicating that losses will be higher this year. This is unacceptable. We cannot constantly undermine our own growth. As everyone knows, people want more Canadian products because they are the best in the world. Technology is being considered as a way to meet export targets, but what good does it do if the higher yields of perishable crops are lost?

We have to find a long-term solution. The solution must not only provide quick relief, although we do want an immediate solution. The committee must definitely hear the solutions that grain producers have to suggest and recommend. We must hear what explanation CN and CP have for the disaster this year, what they have done, what they will do to remedy it, and what they will do to help. We must also ask the government what it is going to do for grain producers in the west, who will unfortunately suffer major economic losses if nothing is done to help them.

We can't keep talking about these problems year after year. We need a viable solution specifically for Canada in order to resolve the systemic issues in grain shipment.

Clearly, we will always be at the mercy of the weather. We live in Canada and have winter every year. Unfortunately for those who do not like winter, it is part of life in Canada. Why? Because we are in Canada. It is unacceptable for the rail companies to use this as an excuse.

In conclusion, this study is intended to identify the systemic problems. We want to hear from stakeholders who want a plan and action immediately, but who also want us to find a way to prevent this crisis from happening year after year. We want to make specific recommendations to the government to find solutions to the grain shipment crisis in Canada. We are asking for the support of all MPs around the table, that is, of all members of the committee. We cannot say it is not our problem, because it is Canada's problem. When Canada is unable to export its grain or sell its products abroad, it is our responsibility to address the problem. It is a problem for agriculture, because we are talking about agricultural products.

There is more for us to do than consider Bill C-49. We must also do an exhaustive review of the problems that undermine grain shipment and provide viable and feasible solutions immediately.

● (1320)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Breton, you have the floor.

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will be very quick.

First I want to thank my opposition colleagues for tabling this motion. We are essentially in favour of the motion tabled today. We would, however, like to propose a few amendments, which I will mention right now.

We would like to use an already scheduled meeting, the committee's meeting on March 21, 2018, to discuss this issue. So we are taking immediate action. In the first hour of the meeting, we

could meet with CN and CP officials. In the second hour, we could hear from representatives of the Grain Growers of Canada.

We would also like the list of witnesses to be sent to the clerk no later than 5 p.m. on March 15, 2018.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Breton.

You heard the amendment.

Would anyone like to comment?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, may we have a copy of the amendment?

Mr. Pierre Breton: I do not have a copy but I can read it out or the clerk can.

The Chair: The clerk will read out the amendment.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Ariane Gagné-Frégeau): The amendment proposes that a meeting be held on March 21 during which the committee would hear from CN and CP officials from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m., and from the Grain Growers of Canada from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. The amendment also proposes that the list of witnesses be sent to the clerk of the committee by 5 p.m. on March 15.

The Chair: Mr. Barlow, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my colleagues across the floor and the NDP for supporting us on this motion. It truly does show that we are working together and that everyone understands the situation that we face in western Canada. I do have a couple of concerns about my colleague's amendments. This is not to say that I don't appreciate the support; these are just the facts. March 21 is too late, and the reason I say so is that road bans in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta will be in place well before then. They are probably being put on right now. Road bans mean that the municipalities are putting weight limits on the roads as of the next week or two, meaning that farmers will not be able to haul their grain in the next couple of weeks. It is that critical.

If we wait another two or three weeks to host this meeting and try to come up with some solutions.... In my opinion, there are things the government can do immediately, even before that meeting, but I am concerned about the March 21 date because the road bans across western Canada will already be in place, meaning that producers will literally not be able to haul their grain to the terminal. That means they won't be getting paid.

The other concern I have is limiting it to one meeting. I appreciate that this is something we have to deal with quickly. Having CN and CP there is important, but I think we're very well aware of what their input is going to be. Our producers and stakeholders have asked the government and us in this committee to come up with a plan by March 15 to try to come up with a resolution for this. To have just one hour to listen to stakeholders, producers, grain companies, and groups like that, I think, is just disingenuous. We have a list of more than a dozen witnesses whom we would like to see. Not including the Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Transport in that one meeting really will do a disservice to our stakeholders, who are looking to us to try to come up with some options here. Again, I appreciate your guys being here. I know this not what you had planned on doing during a constituency week and that you're all busy. I don't want this to come across as being ungrateful, but I just think that March 21 is simply too late and that limiting this to one meeting is doing us a disservice. In my opinion, we're just going to gloss over it and are not being serious about handling this issue.

I talked about the road bans for sure, but the other thing we need to understand here is the cash flow issue. Our producers have a critical cash flow problem. If they can't get their product to the terminal, they don't get paid. If they don't get paid, they can't repay their mortgage and they can't repay their loans. I would also like the government to consider having discussions with lenders, banks, and FCC to get some flexibility in loan repayments, and some forgiveness, or some extension of lines of credit or promotion of the advance payment program. There are lots of things the government could be doing in the meantime that it's not doing. I think we really have to understand the critical situation that we are in right now. This has been delayed too long, and I think for us to wait until March 21 is pushing what is already a critical situation past the point of no return. I think we have to act more quickly than that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

•(1325)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barlow.

I want to welcome Ruth Ellen back to our committee. She has been here a few times before.

Welcome. In the middle of the break, I'm sure you're thrilled to be here as we all are. Mr. Hoback is also replacing Mr. Dreeschen. On the list we have Ruth Brosseau.

Go ahead, please.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

I would like to say how happy I am to see you guys again. I wish it were in different circumstances, but it's good that we're having this meeting. It reminds me of all the years I spent on the agriculture committee with Randy, although we were on opposite sides of the table at the time. It also reminds me of a situation in 2013-14 when we did work together. We were three different parties with different points of view on different issues, but we were all able to come together, work hard, and put politics aside to make sure that we were standing up for farmers.

It's really disappointing and frustrating that a few years later we're back in the same situation. We did have red flags come up. We talked

about the urgency to act. On Bill C-49, we tried to have the part about grain transport carved out to make sure it would be adopted more quickly. The situation we're in right now is very frustrating.

I think that once again we all need to work together to make sure that we are standing up for farmers and that we are going to get this right this time around. I'm hopeful. I'm optimistic. Once again, I think we and the government need to use all the tools in their tool box. There are some options that were used in 2013-14 that can be applied to the situation we're in right now.

I'm happy to see that there is an openness to looking at this at committee, but I'm just concerned, because looking at this on March 21 is once again too late. The timeline that was given for the expectation for the ministers to act was March 15. Every day that goes by... I can't imagine being in the shoes of the people who are trying to transport their grain and how frustrating this is for those farmers. They already deal with weather and so much unexpected volatility, and for this to happen again is completely unacceptable.

I'm really hoping that... We do have our two weeks off from Ottawa when we're supposed to be back in our constituencies, but I think we need to sit down as the agriculture committee and flesh out what options can be undertaken immediately by the government.

I'm supportive of the motion by Luc Berthold, but I think we really need to have CN and CP here. We also need to have Minister Garneau and Minister MacAulay or their representatives come to committee. It's our job to stand up for farmers. This is something that should be non-partisan. I think March 21 is way too late. I know that Bill C-49 is in the Senate right now. It's an omnibus bill; it changes 13 laws. We did try to have that section for grain carved out. When we get back to the House, I propose that we do a unanimous consent motion to have the Senate take out the bit about grain to have it fleshed out and to see if they could look at ways of getting that moving forward faster.

For now, in dealing with this motion, I think we really need to make sure that we are listening and taking the time to take this situation seriously. I'm hoping that there will be an openness from the Liberals on the other side to look at this seriously and to have CN and CP, the ministers, and also the farmers here. We have to listen to the farmers. This is a complicated issue. It's not black and white. I think it's time for all of us to roll up our sleeves and make sure that we get it right for them this time. We can't drop the ball again. We just can't.

Those are my comments for now.

•(1330)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Brosseau.

Mr. Drouin, you have the floor.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We have been talking about it for half an hour already.

Why March 21? Is there some reason in particular?

[English]

I do want to read a press release from the Grain Growers of Canada, our main stakeholders. The one thing they're asking of us is to have a unified voice to press the Senate to pass this bill as quickly as possible. That's what they're asking of us.

What can we do as a committee before March 21 in order for us to put pressure on the Senate? While we as a committee may not be able to hear from witnesses prior to March 21, I think we can write a letter, as a committee, to the chair of the transport committee. They've already had nine meetings. I know it's possible to pass the bill in the Senate much quicker. The House has done it in two months. That wasn't counting the week we had during the Victoria Day week in May and the week we had during Thanksgiving.

I think it's very much possible that the Senate can pass this bill as quickly as possible. The House has done its job. Now it's up to the Senate to do its job. I'm not seeing extra meetings from the Senate to hear from more witnesses. We as a committee must do our job. We have done our job already. We've done our job three times. We voted, and it passed first, second, and third reading in the House. It's over on the Senate side. From a committee's perspective, I think we should write a letter right away, sign it, and send it to the chair of the transportation committee, obviously before March 21.

Mr. Barlow, I know you were talking about the FCC. I'm not sure if you got to see the press release, but it's hot off the press. The FCC has offered assistance to customers impacted by grain movement delays. That's already on the docket for farmers who have been impacted.

I suggest that we write a letter to the committee and hear from witnesses to see.... I know that the rail companies have up to March 15 to come up with a solution and to publish it. I think it would be incumbent on us to hear about the progress, or lack of progress, on March 21. Yes, we do need to hear from grain growers, but I think we should urge the Senate to pass this bill before March 21. They could do it on March 20. They're sitting on March 20, so they could do it on March 20.

•(1335)

The Chair: We will get back to that.

We'll continue with the discussion on the amendment.

Mr. Peschisolido, you're on the list.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): This is a serious problem, and I'm glad to be here, because we have a backlog. We have a problem and we need to fix it.

I agree with Madame Brosseau, Monsieur Barlow, and Monsieur Berthold that we all need to work together in a non-partisan way among all levels of government and agencies. I was heartened to receive a letter this morning that was directed to the rail companies, CN and CP, by both Minister Garneau and Minister MacAulay, saying, hey, there's a problem here and we need to do two very important things: one, we need to get rid of this backlog; and two, we need to figure out how to have an efficient way of transporting

grain so that grain farmers can continue to contribute to our economy. The ministers have requested that they come up, by the 15th, as Monsieur Drouin said, with a plan and put it on their website. So I think we all are engaged here.

Mr. Barlow, perhaps a couple of hours isn't enough to hear from grain growers. We can always have more meetings on it, but I think it's important that everyone get involved here—and I think everyone is.

I also saw in my inbox a note from CN saying that, yes, they may have dropped the ball on this one and that they're willing to work with everyone involved. This is a problem and we need to fix it. I'm heartened that we are all working together.

I fully support the amendment that Monsieur Breton has put forth. I'm not sure whether we need a further amendment, but if we need more time at committee, we'll have it. In fact, as a government, as stakeholders, we're not waiting until the 21st. This meeting is a good meeting, because it's pushed people to act quickly. The government is moving quickly, and it seems as if the rail companies are moving quickly as well.

My suggestion, Mr. Chair, is that we support Monsieur Breton's amendment.

If we do need some more time, Mr. Barlow, I'm sure that as a committee we can provide that time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Just before we move forward, I would ask the committee to refer to me. I know that we're all on good terms with each other, but please refer to the chair instead of naming someone on the committee. Thank you.

We now have Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thanks for keeping us all together in the conversation.

Also thanks to the opposition for bringing us back to Ottawa to look at how we can add our value and our networks to the discussion that we are having, and in the upcoming meeting that we'll be having on the problem we're facing out west.

We have two areas that I think are of concern. We have the systemic areas mentioned in the motion, and then we have the immediate crisis that we as a government and the rail companies are dealing with. With regard to the systemic issues, I'm looking forward, in the study we'll be doing, to having a motion on the table to ask how we will get to \$75 billion in exports, what technologies we will need, and what we will need to do to support our export of agricultural products.

I'm thinking that we will be getting into the systemic issues in a lot of detail in that report, which is going to be lengthy, but the ground is thawing as we speak, and hopefully it will be fine. It doesn't look like it in Ottawa today, but we know that spring is coming, so we know that we need to deal with the emergency situation we have in front of us.

I was on the phone earlier this week, calling out west, talking to grain companies in Calgary and Saskatoon and getting their sense of where the problems are and the source of some of the problems. They mentioned the heavy snows through the mountains this winter, with the risk of avalanche being one of the main risks they are dealing with when they get into the mountains. They talked about the cold weather on the Prairies forcing the rail companies to use shorter carloads so that the few operating locomotives we have had to take fewer cars. That was a temperature issue.

They said that they understand weather-related issues, but they want to see what the longer-term solutions are going to be for this in terms of the numbers of locomotives on the tracks, how we manage avalanches, and how we make sure we can get the high-throughput terminals on the Prairies feeding the ports on the coast. I hope that will be part of our study coming up.

I was on the plane today reading the correspondence. CN has already responded to the ministers' letter. We had both the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Transport sending a strong letter to the rail company saying that we need to see progress and an action plan, and then I did see the response saying that people are being pulled back from holidays or pulled out of retirement, that leases are being signed, and that orders are being made for the locomotives, so there is activity.

A few minutes ago we received information that Farm Credit Canada is going to be providing financial assistance to farmers who need to purchase their inputs for this year. The farmers can't get the cash from their crops that are sitting in almost-full terminals.

We do see some work going on, but I think that we, as a committee, need to understand that work to make sure that we are doing everything we can, so I'm supporting the motion for March 21. I think we will have a lot to talk about by then and we'll get into further studies when we talk about how we can make sure in the future that we can develop the export markets we need to develop using the best technologies and best solutions we can.

• (1340)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Thank you, Chair, for being here today.

Of course rail has always been an issue. As Ms. Brosseau said, we last dealt with this in 2013-14, and I'm disappointed that we're back here dealing with it again. There have been some changes between now and then. Then we didn't have the numbers. We didn't see the data. We didn't know what was going on. Now we have Mark Hemmes with the Quorum Corporation giving us that data every week. When you start seeing at week 12 that 50% of the railcars aren't being delivered, that's the first sign. Then, when you start seeing it show up in weeks 13 and 14 and continuing on...activity should have happened a lot sooner, but we can't take that back.

I think we need both ministers because, for example, with the Minister of Transport coming in front of this committee, we're going to need an order in council to actually show some results here. The reality is that Bill C-49, the way it stands right now, would not fix this problem, and the producers are telling you that; the grain

companies are telling you that. Basically, anybody who is relying on rail for service is telling you that Bill C-49 won't do, so you need amendments. That means the amendments that have to come out of the Senate will take a lot more time.

In the meantime, we need to have an order in council sitting there with fines. The only thing that CN and CP actually react to is fines, so when they start seeing that there's a penalty for not performing, then they actually stand up and take notice.

I give CN credit for the letter that was in the paper today, whether or not that was a result of today's emergency meeting. I will also give credit to the FCC. Again, it's nice and convenient that it made its announcement at the time when this meeting is taking place. Farmers need to know that. That's another reason why we now need the Minister of Agriculture to come in, because there is a cash flow issue here. You have a transportation issue, for which we need the Minister of Transport to tell us the path forward. What he is going to do in the meantime with an order in council is what I'd like to see, until Bill C-49 is amended and brought back to the House with something we can all support.

Then you go to the cash flow issue, so the Minister of Agriculture is going to have to come in. Whether it's having advance programs, talking to all the banks, and doing what they did with the FCC, he needs to have a game plan moving forward now on spring advances, because cash flow is a big issue. We need to figure out what that's going to look like, so he needs to report on that. It's not as though they've never done this before. The department has done things like this in the past, so it's not as though he is taking any new path forward. He can lean on experiences in the department from the past and do something there. That's basically an hour of a meeting.

Then you talk about CN and CP coming in for an hour. I think that's good, because they need to present their path forward and what they're doing. I think CN, in their article, talked about leasing locomotives and putting managers on the lines, and that's good. I wish they would have been doing it in week 12 instead of now, because road bans are hitting. Basically, with road bans, restrictions come into play, and then they usually don't get lifted until we start seeding. So by seeding time, we have a whole pile of grain that has to move into terminals; guys are trying to put their crop in; and everything just hits the farm at the same time. There's no ability to spread it out. That's why the winter season is so important to move grain: you have the frozen roads; you can move grain, and you don't have to worry about planting, spraying, or anything else going on at that time. Again, we can't take that back. It's unfortunate, but that's just the way it is.

So you look at that, and then you say, “Now we want to talk to producers.” Think about it. One hour of producers would get you four producers in here from three prairie provinces—Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba—and then there are even some producers in northern B.C. That doesn't even get you one per province. Then you have three parties here, so everybody is going to want their producers here. So again, one hour is inadequate to give you a good idea of how it's impacting different areas across the Prairies.

And it does have an impact on different areas. When CN and CP start getting behind, instead of bringing cars into Saskatchewan and Manitoba, because it's a longer trip, they flip things through Alberta more quickly and ignore Saskatchewan and Manitoba, so you have to deal with these inter-regional aspects. There are lots of things to consider here before you can just say, “Hey, we're going to have an emergency meeting” and feel good. Farmers won't buy it, guys. It shows that you're not willing to do the job. It just shows that you're going to show the goodwill but not actually put any teeth into anything to get results. So you need the order in council. You need to move this forward. You need to do it now, because it has waited too long.

Chair, I guess I'll wrap it up there. Just keep in mind that if you're sitting on the farm right now, you have bills to pay from last year. You're supposed to be buying inputs for next year, so you're supposed to order your canola and stuff like that. A lot of that stuff is supposed to have been ordered in December or November, and all of those bills are starting to come due. You have bins full of grain. We have some 40 ships sitting out on the west coast waiting to be loaded. This is a crisis. This is very real. I'm sorry, but pushing off until it's convenient for us isn't acceptable. We need to do it now.

Thank you, Chair.

• (1345)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to pick up on a number of things, and Mr. Breton's amendment in particular.

First, we have been told that two hours of debate would not be enough. If the committee wishes, the meeting could be extended. On March 21, we do not have to have a two-hour meeting; it could be four hours long. We could also have one on March 19, since we will all be in Ottawa that day.

We cannot drag out the study of this issue by having a series of meetings over three or four weeks. We want to resolve the crisis as quickly as possible. It would be better to have a meeting in the evening of March 19. Monday nights are not usually very busy. We could have a four-hour meeting on March 19. That would give us the time to hear from many of the witnesses suggested by all the parties.

If Mr. Breton is agreeable to this proposal, that would be ideal. It would probably be easier to have a long meeting on March 19 than on March 21. It is usually easier for everyone to make time on a Monday night. I propose that we have a four-hour meeting. We could invite everyone on our witness list. We would have enough time to

welcome them all. At the same time, we would be showing that this is urgent. The goal is not to talk about it for four weeks, but rather to resolve the problem quickly.

If Mr. Breton had not proposed this amendment to the motion, I would have suggested a day-long meeting next week in order to welcome all the witnesses. On the other hand, I would go along with a meeting next week, provided that it is four hours long. That would be a solution.

Madam Clerk, could we do that?

The Clerk: You would have to propose a subamendment.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I would like to continue talking about my suggestion, and then I will propose a subamendment in a few minutes.

I support the amendment, but I would like it to be a four-hour meeting on March 19 rather than March 21, given the urgency of the matter.

As to Mr. Drouin's suggestion about the committee sending a letter, I would reiterate that Bill C-49 is an omnibus bill that does not concern our committee alone. The letter will have to reflect that, if you want us to agree on sending such a letter. That involves other committees and other stakeholders. The committee may express its concern, but we know that Bill C-49 will not solve the grain shipment problem in the short term. We need a short-term solution now. It is important for the committee to signal that it is monitoring the situation closely.

If we were to hold a four-hour meeting on March 19, that in itself would send a signal that people will have to get moving before March 19 at 4 p.m. If the committee is in the mood to write letters, it could also write to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, calling upon him to take all the measures available to him to intervene as early as March 15, rather than waiting for the committee's meeting on March 21. There are clearly measures the government can take.

I would remind you that the Canadian Federation of Agriculture wants a plan from the government, not just Bill C-49.

As to the subamendment, I propose therefore that the meeting be held on March 19 and that it be four hours long. As to sending our list of suggested witnesses by March 15, that would not change.

• (1350)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Let's not get off track. A subamendment was proposed, and that is what we need to vote on first.

I had a list of members who wanted to speak. Would anyone now like to comment on the subamendment?

Ms. Nassif, you may go ahead.

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to thank my fellow members for requesting this very important meeting to address the grain transportation issues facing farmers in western Canada.

Further to the actions taken by our government and the joint letter from the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Transport, we are pleased to learn that CN has already put out a press release. It therefore responded before the March 15, 5 p.m., deadline we had set.

CN intends to take a number of measures. It plans to offer incentives to key members of its operations staff who delay retirement and postpone vacations, as well as to recently retired employees who return to work. It also plans to deploy qualified managers to operate extra trains and add crews in western Canada. Approximately 250 conductors were deployed in the last three months of 2017. Some 400 conductors have been deployed in the first three months of 2018, and an additional 375 will be deployed between April and June. CN has also leased 130 locomotives, nearly all of which are currently in use, to increase capacity in western Canada. In addition, it is investing more than \$250 million this year to build new track and yard capacity in western Canada. Clearly, CN is taking numerous steps.

There is obviously a lot of work to do, but the company has taken all of those actions to prevent a crisis like the one in 2013-14, which cost the economy \$8 billion.

We are all glad to meet on March 21 to hear from CN, CP, and Grain Growers of Canada representatives. We will keep working together to advance the interests of Canadian farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Nassif.

Mr. Longfield, you may go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

And thanks, Mr. Berthold.

The idea of March 19, I think, is a good idea, and four hours is better than two. Generally, Monday evening is an evening when we can get things done. I think that also shows that this committee does work well together, which we do. We are working on behalf of the farmers. I think we do all have a common focus there.

It was good to see the Grain Growers of Canada also mention in the letter that we not make it a partisan issue but just solve the problem.

I want to comment on the omnibus piece, but maybe we could do that after we deal with the subamendment. I spoke on Bill C-49 in the House, and I have some thoughts relating to the purported omnibus nature of the bill, which I want to share with this committee from what I said in the House about it, but if we could deal with the subamendment, that would be wonderful.

• (1355)

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Breton, you may go ahead.

Mr. Pierre Breton: We are having quite a productive discussion, which shows how open all the committee members are to doing something, and how seriously they are taking this issue.

Surely, grain farmers will want to have their say. If we have one two-hour meeting to hear from CN, CP, and Grain Growers of Canada representatives, we won't have time to hear from farmers. I would therefore like to propose a subamendment to the subamendment, if that's possible.

I agree that we need four hours. I move that we use the two hours on March 19 and the two hours on March 21 to hear from witnesses. That would give us four hours to hear from witnesses.

I see some consultation is necessary.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, can we take a quick break? I'd like to speak with Mr. Breton.

The Chair: Very well. We will suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

• (1355)

(Pause)

• (1400)

The Chair: I now call the meeting back to order.

Mr. Breton is the next speaker on the list.

Go ahead, Mr. Breton.

Mr. Pierre Breton: We had a chat, and we also chatted with our colleagues opposite. We agree on holding the meeting earlier. We had proposed March 21, but we agree we should meet on Monday, March 19. We would have four hours with all the witnesses, from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. We would hear from representatives of CN, CP, and the Grain Growers of Canada. Actually, we would hear from everyone on the list, but those are the main ones. I gather that some members would like to invite farmers, even though we will be hearing from the organization that represents them. We are open to meeting with the country's grain growers.

• (1405)

The Chair: I'd like you to clarify something, please, Mr. Breton.

In your first motion, you proposed that we split the meeting in two, one hour with the first panel and one hour with the second panel. Do you want to keep that ratio, in other words, two hours with the CN and CP representatives, and two hours with the Grain Growers of Canada representatives?

Mr. Pierre Breton: We now have four hours. I think we'll have enough time if we spend an hour with CN and CP representatives and an hour with the Grain Growers of Canada representatives. I gather that some members would also like to hear from grain farmers, so we could spend the remaining two hours with them.

We didn't talk about that, but we can see what everyone thinks.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Barlow, go ahead. Maybe you can clarify this.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Again, I appreciate the willingness of our colleagues to make some compromises.

I really don't want to harp on this, and I do appreciate your being flexible, but I think next week is more palatable because of the situation we're facing.

To my colleague Ms. Nassif, I appreciate your defence of CN's letter today, but we've been through this before. In 2013 and 2014, there were all kinds of platitudes from the rail companies. As my colleague Mr. Hoback said, we saw the warning signs in January that we were going to be facing this. We talked about this in October and said that this was certainly an issue. For CN to come forward at the eleventh hour with some steps is great, but it's not like these steps are going to be on the ground tomorrow. These are things that are going to go on over weeks, and I just don't think the impact is going to be there.

Unfortunately, we have to implement some steps, some legislation, and, for lack of a better term, some "punishment" there, such that if they don't get their act together, there are going to be some consequences. They're going to give us all these great platitudes that they're doing everything they can to address the situation, and that's great. I appreciate that—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Bill C-49—

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow: Excuse me. I have the floor.

I appreciate that, but again, they should have done this weeks and months ago. We're not here to stand up for the rail companies. We're here to try to address the situation, and it is critical. I would prefer that we meet next week. March 15 would be one date. That's the deadline that the CFA and some of our stakeholders asked for.

Really briefly on my colleague Mr. Drouin's comment on the letter that we should be writing to the Senate, the Senate is not our problem. The Senate is the Senate. Again, this is something that should have been addressed months ago. Also, Bill C-49 may not even resolve all the problems. Our stakeholders, the grain terminals, and the producers also asked for the government to come up with a plan to try to address some of the backlog. Will we solve all the problems? No, but we can certainly put some things in place that will help alleviate some of the situations.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, I would suggest that we try to meet next week if at all possible and that the government work on putting the infrastructure and the framework in place for an order in council to get the grain moving, and that it take some concrete steps to protect our grain producers and our trade markets that are out there and ensure that we get the grain moving sooner rather than later.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barlow.

Madam Brousseau.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau: Thank you, Chair.

It's frustrating. I know there is goodwill in the proposed subamendments to the motion put forward by my colleague Luc. But, you know, we're on break week from the House, and we've had this important meeting today. We're not sitting next week. I think, because of the context we're in right now, we need to look at this next week. Four hours is four hours. We'll have CN and CP. I would love to have Minister MacAulay and Minister Garneau come before

committee and talk about their plan, but I don't see why we can't start looking at this next week.

Writing letters is great. Wishful thinking, good intentions, hoping, and wishing haven't done anything to make this situation better. I think the letters that were put out yesterday were just a front to say, "Look, we're taking this seriously. Look at us dealing with this issue."

I think you know that the Minister of Transport wrote a letter in January. What happened with that? Nothing.

There are so many things that can and should be done. Looking at this issue in a week or two is going to do what to help farmers? I think people who are in this situation right now are looking towards the agriculture committee to stand up for them, and I think taking this issue seriously would mean we would look at this next week.

We all have responsibilities as members of Parliament and as members of the agriculture committee. I think we should be looking at this next week. I think we should be putting pressure on the minister to be using all the tools in his tool box. In 2013-14 there were measures taken by the Conservative government. Those measures put pressure on the railways to get their act together, and they worked. Penalties—\$100,000 a week—are peanuts to CN and CP. The pressure that farmers are under currently... They should not be in this situation again. We should have learned from the grain crisis in 2013-14. There were signs.

Obviously we cannot go back in time, but I think we need to do our job, and I think we need to put pressure.

And you, too, members of the Liberal government, need to put pressure on your ministers, the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Transport. Bill C-49 is not going to fix everything, but definitely when we get back to the House, I'm going to go forward with a unanimous consent motion to ask the Senate to carve out the grain piece and get that moving along as quickly as possible. The part of Bill C-49 on grain transport needs to get passed, but we have to fix it too. We have to make sure that we get that right, and not just pass it to pass it. It can't just be a band-aid. I think we have to make sure we get this right. We have to take the time and we have to get it right. Amendments and subamendments to this motion are great, but I think we need to look at this seriously. We need to roll up our sleeves; we need to get down to work; and we have to take this seriously.

I think having a meeting next week might be shitty. We have to cancel stuff in our ridings, but it's our responsibility. This is our job, so why not get down to work next week? It's an inconvenience for farmers. This might be an inconvenience for us, but we have a responsibility to fix it.

That's my piece.

•(1410)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Brosseau.

Mr. Hoback, you may go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Thank you, Chair.

Again, I'm a guest at this committee today, and I appreciate being here. I'm going to draw on some historical knowledge. I've been talking to some of the other people in the room who were here before, when we did this the last time. We had two meetings, and then we had five meetings on Bill C-30, which was the legislation, so you could say that in 2013-14 we had seven meetings to talk about this.

Right now in my riding I have a farmer-owned rail line that has 65 loaded cars sitting there. They have been sitting there and sitting there, and when they are sitting there full of grain, that means everything else behind them is full of grain, so the farmer-owned terminal is full of grain.

To say, okay, we're going to come back when it's convenient for us, I don't think is appropriate. I think we should come back next week and show them that we are committed to this. To me, the 15th makes a lot of sense, because CN and CP are supposed to have that data for us on what their game plan is moving forward.

It's nice to see CN publish it in the paper. I think that's good, but I've had them do this to me in the past so many times when the railways said that they were going to do this and do that. When it comes to actuality, it never happens. That's why you need to have penalties in place. You need to have an order in council in place. That's why I think you need to have the Minister of Transport here, listening to those farmers. He should be here for the full four or eight hours, whatever we do, to really get an understanding of the impact this has on people's livelihoods and on their families, their farms, and their operations.

I would suggest that we come back on the 15th and do the whole day. The ministers can be here. The stakeholders can be here. The farmers can be here. You can take any committee room you want. You can televise it so that people back in western Canada can watch us and listen. It would show from this committee that we're serious, that we're taking this issue very seriously, and that we care.

This isn't a partisan issue. You'll find that at least in the past it has never been a partisan issue. We're on the same side in fighting for our farmers and our producers. CN and CP are the problem here again, unfortunately, and we can learn from the things we did in 2013-14. We can make some fixes and some improvements in the order in council to make it more effective and efficient. We can have something in place so that the producers know they have a backstop

right now, and then Bill C-49 will do what Bill C-49 does, with amendments or without amendments, split apart or not split apart.

The reality on Bill C-49 is that even if you wrote them a letter today, the Senate won't read it until probably the 21st, and then, in terms of the reaction time from there, we would probably be looking at May, June, or July. That's not even a feasible option. You would have more impact by writing a letter to the ministers, because they can do stuff right now. They can do an order in council tonight if they so choose. They can take action if they so choose.

An hon. member: That's right.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Again, I'd encourage you to do it next week, on the 15th. Do the full day. Show people you're really serious about it. From there, let's see what comes out of that meeting, but I think the minister should be looking at what that order in council could look like.

I'm offering sound advice based on being through this in the past. We're not asking for seven meetings. We're basically asking for a commitment to really flesh this out right now, in one day.

•(1415)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hoback.

Monsieur Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I'd like to hear where my colleague Mr. Breton stands on that request. In other words, are there any technical or logistical issues that would prevent us from meeting on March 15?

I can see there's goodwill on both sides of the table for this meeting. We are doing this to find a solution for farmers. Mr. Hoback experienced the last crisis; he was there. He spoke about it. We also heard Ms. Brosseau say that urgent action was needed. I think this is an opportunity to take that action, if, indeed, everyone is available.

I'd like to hear what Mr. Breton has to say. Then, with your permission, Mr. Chair, we can try to simplify things for the clerk. We are currently discussing a subamendment to a subamendment, which complicates things a little.

First, however, I'd like to hear what my colleague has to say in response to the last two members who spoke.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Breton, the floor is yours.

Mr. Pierre Breton: I will be brief.

We've been talking for 75 minutes today. I think we have made progress since the beginning of the meeting. We went from a two-hour meeting on March 21 to a possible four-hour meeting on March 19. We are in agreement with the motion submitted by our colleagues. We feel that everyone is supporting the grain producers in this file. We can't agree on the date, but today I have not heard any partisan comments.

I think that at this point everyone has been heard and has expressed their point of view. I don't know what procedure we want to use but I would like us to vote to settle this matter. I would like us to vote on the proposed subamendment which is that we hold a four-hour meeting on March 19 from 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., and that the list of witnesses be sent to Madam Clerk at the latest by March 15, at 5:00 p.m.

I would now like us to vote on that.

The Chair: If you are ready, we are going to vote on the subamendment.

There is just one thing to be changed in the subamendment, at the request of the clerk. Do you agree to set the deadline for receiving witness lists at March 12 rather than March 15? This will allow the clerk to do her work well and to have time to call the witnesses we want to receive here.

• (1420)

Mr. Luc Berthold: We have a lot of things on the table. It's really complicated. If Mr. Breton would change his amendment, I would withdraw my subamendment. If he would propose an amendment to the motion, including all of the recommendations, I think it would be easier. That's my opinion. I am ready to withdraw the subamendment I submitted in order that we have only one amendment. Otherwise, it's complicated.

Personally, I would like to avoid having to move a subamendment. I agree on the result, but I am not completely in agreement on the date and I would like the amendment to take that into account.

Mr. Breton, I think that you would agree that we not limit ourselves to farmers. The first hour could be devoted to CN and CP, and during the subsequent hours, we could hear witnesses from the suggested witness list. In that way, we would give the clerk some leeway in organizing the meeting.

Mr. Breton, if you wish, the request that the meeting be televised could be added to your amendment.

The Chair: If we have the unanimous consent of the members of the committee, we can proceed in that manner. It is up to you to decide.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I withdraw my subamendment.

(Subamendment withdrawn)

The Chair: You must withdraw the subamendment and the amendment before proposing a new amendment.

Mr. Luc Berthold: It was Mr. Breton's amendment.

The Chair: Do we all agree that Mr. Breton's amendment be withdrawn and that he present a new one? If we withdraw that amendment, we erase everything and go back to square one, so to speak. Then we can debate Mr. Breton's new amendment.

Mr. Pierre Breton: These are technical details.

(Amendment withdrawn)

The Chair: I am going to read the new amendment as I have it before me; it integrates the proposals from the subamendment. You can tell me what you think.

The amendment moves that this meeting take place on Monday, March 19, that it last four hours, and that the members of the committee be invited to submit their witness lists to the clerk, including contact information, by March 12, 2018, 5:00 p.m., at the latest.

Is there anything else?

Mr. Luc Berthold: I asked Mr. Breton whether he would agree to add that the meeting be televised, so that people out west could watch.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Yes.

The Chair: Fine. We will add to the amendment that the meeting will be televised.

Has everyone heard the amendment?

Ms. Brosseau, did you want to add a comment?

[*English*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Would it be possible to invite the ministers? I think it would be really important to have the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture here. I know that we've just started over and got rid of all the subamendments we had to the original motion, so I don't want to come back and add too many amendments to this motion.

I still think we need to look at this next week. Looking at it on the 19th is so far ahead. A day in politics is a long time. I would love to have this issue before committee next week, but I think what's really important is having the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture come before committee to talk about their plan and what kinds of tools they are thinking about using. Four hours goes really fast.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Breton, would it be possible to invite the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and especially the Minister of Transport, Mr. Garneau, to appear before the committee?

The Chair: I'd like to point out that these people can be on the list of witnesses you are going to submit, if you wish.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: I think it would be important to include that in the motion. Of course, we are going to provide our witness lists for our study of grain transport prices. My list is already ready. I think, however, that the motion should, by all means, specify that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and especially the Minister of Transport, should be present.

I want to check with the members of the Liberal Party to see if they are open to the idea of inviting the ministers responsible.

• (1425)

The Chair: In that case, Ms. Brosseau, it will have to be a subamendment.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Fine.

The Chair: We are going to begin with a vote on the subamendment and then we can go back to the amendment.

Does anyone have any other comments to make?

[English]

If there are no other comments, we shall vote on the subamendment by Ms. Brosseau that we invite both the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture to that meeting on the 19th of March.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: I understand that the ministers have very busy schedules. Maybe it could be at their earliest convenience if they can't make it on the 19th. Whenever they're available, I think they should come before the agriculture committee to talk about the situation and what their plan is.

The Chair: If not the 19th—

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Yes, just as soon as they are available.

The Chair: Okay, you have heard the amendment to the amendment. We shall take a vote.

[Translation]

If no one else wants to speak, we will vote.

[English]

All in favour of the subamendment of Ms. Brosseau to invite both ministers?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: A recorded vote, please.

The Chair: Okay.

(Subamendment negated [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Now for comments, we will go to the amendment proposed by Monsieur Breton.

[Translation]

The amendment asks that this meeting be televised, that it take place on Monday, March 19, and last four hours. The amendment also asks the members of the committee to submit their lists of witnesses, including coordinates, to the clerk by March 12, 2018, 5:00 p.m., at the latest.

You have heard the amendment. Are we ready to hear the question?

[English]

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: That has been decided. Now we have to vote on the original motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: That's all I have.

Do you have a comment, Mr. Longfield?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: There was discussion earlier about sending a note to the Senate. Are we dealing with that now?

The Chair: We....

[Translation]

Did you want to make that a motion, Mr. Drouin?

Mr. Francis Drouin: No. In fact, I would like to ask for the unanimous consent of the committee.

The Chair: Mr. Drouin asks for the committee's unanimous consent to send a letter to the Senate.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I'm asking that we send a letter to Senator Tkachuk, chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, so that the Senate may finish its work. The Senate committee has already held nine meetings on this topic. The House concluded its study of the bill in two months, and so I'm sure the Senate will be able to study it at all stages up to third reading within the same timeframe.

I believe it is essential that we send a letter from the committee and that we send a copy to Mr. Peter Harder, the government representative in the Senate, to Mr. Larry Smith, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, to Mr. Joseph Day, leader of the Liberals in the Senate, and to Mr. Andrew Scheer, Leader of the Official Opposition in the House. Indeed, as you know, some senators are still part of the Conservative Party and I am sure that my colleagues will exert pressure within their caucus as well.

● (1430)

The Chair: Are there any comments?

Mr. Longfield, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: There were some comments from the other side around the word "omnibus". As I said earlier, I have spoken to this in the House. It's a comprehensive bill. It deals with an integrated transportation network, so several departments are involved with the bill. It's not like a budget bill that also has environmental aspects to it; everything in this bill has to do with transportation. It's an integrated transportation bill, a comprehensive bill. I think that getting the bill in its entirety through the Senate is important so that we can move forward to support the farmers.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Brosseau, you have the floor.

[English]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Thank you, Chair. I hope that the letters the agriculture committee sends bring action.

I think back to all of the numerous letters on PACA that we wrote recently to the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Innovation. It took us many months to get a response. Finally, we did get a response. I've found it very frustrating and almost insulting that our committee wrote letters and didn't even get notification to say that they got the letter, they're looking at it, and they'll eventually get back to us. Our letters were completely ignored.

I think Bill C-49 is going to be part of the solution. Once again, I think everybody wants to see the portion of Bill C-49 on grain passed, and passed quickly, but it has to be done right. A lot of groups, a lot of farmers, and a lot of our stakeholders have said that it needs to be fixed. It needs to be amended. Once again, I think we have to make sure that we get it right.

As for Bill C-49, we could debate ad nauseam what is an omnibus bill and what is not, but when there is a piece of legislation that changes 13 other pieces of legislation, even though they might have some kind of link, it is an omnibus bill. We're not going to have that debate right now at committee.

I've said before—and I've been thinking about this for a while because Bill C-49 is in the other place—we're looking at ways to get the grain part carved out and expedited. When we get back to the House, I will be asking for unanimous consent to have that done in the Senate. Maybe you guys could look at it. We've been talking to the clerks. We're going to draft a motion. Hopefully, we'll get all-party support to ask the Senate to carve out the grain portion.

I'm not against writing a letter. I think what we should also be writing a letter to the Minister of Agriculture and, notably, the Minister of Transport asking him to act, asking him to look back. He was in the House in 2013-14 in the second opposition party. He needs to look at the measures that were taken by the Conservative government. There are tools he could be using that he isn't using right now.

As the agriculture committee, we have decided to look at this on the 19th, but I think what we need to do is write to the Minister of Transport and ask him to move forward with an order in council. I think we need to ask him to pull out the big stick. Hopefully, the Minister of Agriculture is putting pressure on and working with the Minister of Transport, but we need to be standing up for farmers.

Bill C-49 is one thing, and obviously we're going to do our best to see that the grain portion gets carved out and moved forward with in a decent manner in the Senate, but I think there's something we could do now. We could be putting pressure on the Minister of Transport and asking him to take all the tools available to get grain moving. We can have all the trade deals in the world, but it doesn't matter if we can't get the grain out. The perception of us on the international scene is being tarnished once again because we can't get our shit together, so I'm really hoping that we could all come together. Why don't we put a letter together for the Minister of Transport—and cc it to the Minister of Agriculture—asking him to use all of the tools in the tool box?

•(1435)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Brosseau.

Mr. Hoback, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Thank you, Chair.

I have mixed feelings about writing a letter to the Senate. I want to see action. I can count, and I realize that we don't have a majority. You have the majority, so whatever happens here will be the Liberal will. As for whether we should write a letter to encourage the Senate to pass a piece of legislation fast, just for one part of the legislation, to deal with a crisis, I'd rather go the other route and split it apart, to do the appropriate study on the entire legislation in the Senate and then do the appropriate study on Bill C-49 on the rail aspect of it. Then you would actually be bringing forward good legislation, not rushed legislation. In the meantime, the minister has the ability to issue an order in council to backstop farmers right now, to have an impact right now, and to see that as Bill C-49 chugs through and perhaps gets amended, it actually comes out as a reasonably good piece of legislation instead of a rupt piece of legislation.

I guess I'm kind of disappointed. If you're going to write a letter, the persons who can have the most impact right now are the

ministers and the Prime Minister, not the Senate. The Senate does what the Senate does, in the Senate's time. From talking to the chair of the transportation committee in the Senate, I see that he tried to include more meetings. It was the Liberal independent senators who would not agree to extra meetings. So if you're going to write a letter, I would maybe suggest that you write a letter to the whip of the Liberal senators and ask him why he wouldn't be willing to hold more meetings.

Mr. Francis Drouin: They're not in our caucus.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Well, you know who it is.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Randy Hoback: The independent senator whip? You do know who it is.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I could not agree more with my two colleagues than I do at this time.

As I said already in my introduction, we offered to split Bill C-49 countless times so that certain measures could be passed more quickly; we suggested it to the Liberals. We agreed and would have provided our unanimous consent to pass it at the right time. We said this several times in speeches, as did the other opposition parties. We were ready to have certain parts of Bill C-49 passed quickly because we knew that a crisis was imminent, since this has happened before.

Even though some want to present Bill C-49 as an omnibus bill, in my opinion it is rather inconceivable to amalgamate the rights of airline passengers with the settlement of a grain crisis out west. Explain to me how those two topics can be related, Mr. Chair. It's incredible.

Now they would like our committee to ask the Senate to accelerate its study of the bill to solve the grain crisis, at the risk of adopting, at the same time, provisions that would have disastrous consequences on the rights of airline passengers. That is not my role.

Some suggestions have already been made. If the Senate wants to split the bill on its own initiative, the opposition will commit to having things move very quickly so that...

[English]

Mr. Francis Drouin: On a point of order, I assume that we don't have unanimous consent. I didn't want to get into a debate. I can feel from the other side that we don't have unanimous consent, so we can end this right now.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Very good. So, Mr. Drouin withdraws his motion.

In that case, I will go back to my proposal that we write a letter to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and to the Minister of Transport. I request the unanimous consent of the committee to do that. As Mr. Hoback and Ms. Brosseau said, the only two people who can act immediately and find a solution are those ministers.

The Chair: I'd like to remind you that the standing orders specify that we have to obtain the unanimous consent in order to have the right to withdraw a motion.

Is there unanimous consent to withdraw the motion, or Mr. Drouin's request, asking that the committee write to the Senate committee? Do you want to vote on that?

• (1440)

Mr. Francis Drouin: No, we do not have consent.

The Chair: Fine. The request stands then.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Yes. In fact, he's speaking about a letter that...

The Chair: So, those who are in favour of...

Mr. Luc Berthold: Just a minute, Mr. Chair. In that case, I have a point of order. We were discussing a motion and I was interrupted.

Are you asking me to vote on a motion asking the committee to send a letter to the Senate?

The Chair: I'm sorry, it was not a motion but a request.

Mr. Luc Berthold: So, if it was not a motion, we were only debating?

The Chair: It was a request for the unanimous consent of the committee to send a letter to the Senate.

Mr. Luc Berthold: So, that's over and we are not talking about that letter anymore.

The Chair: All those in favour of withdrawing the request to send a letter, raise your hand.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. This isn't working. You are asking us to vote on something that is not a motion. What are we voting on?

The Chair: On a request by a member to send a letter.

Was that not a motion, Mr. Drouin?

Mr. Luc Berthold: If it was not a motion, let's stop talking about it, and that will be over.

Mr. Francis Drouin: No, it was not a motion, and that is why I asked for unanimous consent.

The Chair: So, there was no motion.

Normally, when we ask for unanimous consent, debate is not possible. Since there was no motion, there should not be any debate.

Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

Ms. Brosseau, you have the floor.

[English]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: As I was saying before, we need to put pressure on the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture. We're going to have this meeting in a week and a half. That's fine, but our job is to stand up for farmers. I don't know how many times I will say this, but it's the job of all of us—Conservative, NDP, and the Liberal government—to stand up for farmers.

In this meeting, we've spent two hours to decide that we're going to have another meeting on the grain crisis. I think farmers are looking to us for action. One thing we could do today is to agree

unanimously to put pressure on the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture, as I said, to use all of the tools available.

These are not new things. They've existed for a long, long time and they've worked in the past when we've been in a similar situation. When we were in a situation in 2013-14, the Conservatives used an order in council to put pressure on the rail companies. They demanded that action be taken. They had minimum requirements for grain movement, and there were penalties. We need to write a letter and put pressure on the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture. We need to see their plan. Why aren't they moving forward? Why aren't they using these tools?

I think farmers want to know why.

The Chair: Do you have a motion?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Yes, sure, if it takes a motion, I'll move a motion for unanimous support for the following.

I want to ask the agriculture committee to write a letter to the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture and ask what their plan is. We need to talk about the importance of making sure that action is taken now, and talk about the option to have an order in council to set penalties.

We could clean that up a bit. I know that's not the cleanest of motions.

I think we're all on the same page, acknowledging that this is a crisis. I think we should all be unanimous and come together and write a letter to the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture asking for action now.

The Chair: Okay.

We have a motion on the floor to request that, I think you said, that both the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Transport appear in front of the committee.

Is that it?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: No, it's to write a letter.

The Chair: It's to write a letter. Sorry.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: It's to write a letter. I would love to have them come before committee.

The Chair: No, we've already debated that.

• (1445)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: They voted against that motion.

The Chair: Yes, we voted against that.

So, to write a letter to both of them—

Mr. Luc Berthold: To take action...

The Chair: —to take action by any means.

An hon. member: Including whatever's necessary—

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: And penalties.

The Chair: Okay, it's for an order in council and penalties. Okay.

[Translation]

Are there any comments?

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think that the debate on the letter to the Senate is over. In any case, we've just seen that several groups are asking the Senate to change Bill C-49. Let's let the Senate do its work and respond to grain producers who are requesting amendments, and let's deal with that which concerns us directly.

What concerns us is the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Transport, and the western grain crisis. It's important that we ask these two ministers to act. That is why we will support the NDP motion asking the committee to write a letter to the two ministers, so that cabinet may intervene immediately in this dossier.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Peschisolido, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Mr. Chair, I think this was a phenomenal meeting. I commend the members of the committee who called the meeting. I think everyone is on the same page. There is a situation. It's a problem, and we need to fix it. I think everyone is getting on board.

I was very pleased, as I mentioned earlier, to receive a copy of a letter, a strongly worded letter, sent by the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture to the rail lines, CN and CP, asking specifically what our stakeholders have asked for, what the farmers are asking for: fix this backlog; show us a plan that says how you'll get rid of the backlog; and then, once the backlog is gotten rid of, what will you do to put in a proper plan, systemically and holistically, to ensure that this problem will never occur again?

We've heard from CN. They are going to act. There's a deadline of the 15th. That's what our stakeholders have asked for. The companies CN and CP will, I assume, or I hope—if not, there will be penalties—put forth their plan. They will communicate with the ministers.

That's what the ministers have done. The government has acted. That's how our government ought to operate. We have a role as an agriculture committee. There is a role of ministers, of MPs. We're all acting together, not in a partisan way but in a co-operative way, to fix a problem. That's what government is all about. When there's a problem, we fix it. The Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture reacted properly. They told the rail lines that there was a problem and to do something. CN, to its credit, came out and said, yes, we may have dropped the ball on this one; we're going to act.

So let's play this out. I'd like to commend the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture for acting. Let's see what occurs. On the 15th or before, we'll see the plans from the rail lines. Then we'll hear from all the stakeholders.

Again, it's a great thing that we had this meeting today. We'll follow up on the 19th. We'll do our role as a committee. The ministers are doing their role. Farmers are putting pressure on the rail lines. The government is putting pressure on the rail lines. I'm assuming that the rail lines will act, because there will be consequences if they don't.

I think it's a good thing. We're moving forward very quickly. I'd like to commend Monsieur Berthold, Monsieur Barlow, and the other two members of the committee who asked for this meeting. They are not here today, but they asked for the meeting. That's a good thing. I think we are working together on this.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Peschisolido.

Mr. Drouin, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm not so sure that writing a letter to the ministers and asking them for action now will solve the issue. They have acted. The House has acted. What we need to do is pass Bill C-49. I understand that it may not be perfect. I remember when my mother used to make me dinner. She would put a steak on my plate, and peas and rice. I didn't like the rice, but I still ate it. It wasn't perfect, but I was thankful for it. I think the best action we can take is pass Bill C-49. I'm failing to understand...

Here we are, going back and forth, arguing about whom we should write. The quickest action this committee can take before March 19—I do recall that we are meeting with stakeholders on March 19—is to send that letter to senators, because they will be meeting, and they have to respond to that. I don't necessarily agree with sending a letter to the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture when we know that in fact they have acted. They have sent a letter to the rail companies. They have acted on this issue. Their hands are tied, because they don't have the legislative power to act. That's called Bill C-49.

A voice: [Inaudible—Editor]

Mr. Francis Drouin: That's called Bill C-49. It needs to pass. An order in council is not going to get passed by March 19, I can guarantee you that.

• (1450)

The Chair: Order.

Monsieur Berthold.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, we should let Mr. Drouin speak more. Indeed, the more he speaks, the more we realize that he should pay more attention to what was done in the past. First, the first grain crisis was settled by a minister through a decree. I can't get over it. All the member is suggesting is inaction. He suggests that we write a letter to the Senate, which owes us nothing, to ask it to accelerate things, even if the result is imperfect. This makes no sense.

I want to say to my colleague Mr. Peschisolido that we are not really the government here. We are the committee. You acknowledged that holding that meeting allowed us to put pressure on CN and CP to find solutions. Our role at the committee is to exert pressure on the government, and that is why I want us to send a letter to the government to remind it that in the past, the government has used the power of cabinet to act immediately. It did not have to wait for legislation to be passed. That is why we have to send this letter to the ministers. We want to act and send a clear message to the cabinet and the ministers. The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, which is not the government, must play its role by exerting pressure on the government.

The letter sent by the two ministers asks both companies, without imposing the least consequence, to present a plan so that we may perhaps see a solution soon, and that is all. For our part, we want to remind both ministers of the importance of their role. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food may have forgotten that he has a seat at the cabinet table. We are here to remind him as often as possible of the fact that occupying that seat allows him to make decisions, and that we want to see him make one to resolve this situation. He does not have to wait for the railway companies to take steps. He can act right away to settle this crisis.

It is important that we remember our role. Announcing that this emergency meeting would be held today did produce some effects. All of a sudden, a lot of people reacted, including CN, CP and the government. The government began to write letters, which we had been asking it to do for more than a week, to no avail. We all seem to like to write letters; remember that the first proposal requesting a letter was made by the Liberals. The only way this committee can act to solve this crisis is to write to both ministers to ask them to use all of the tools and powers at their disposal to have the railway companies respect what is in the letter we received today, or deal with consequences.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Barlow, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you, Chair. I'll be quick.

I'm looking forward to the meeting on the 19th because it's clear that our colleagues are going to learn some things that I don't think they quite understand. First of all, the quickest action isn't sending a letter to the Senate. The quickest action is doing an order in council. That wouldn't take weeks. It would take perhaps hours for cabinet to pass that through a couple of ministers if they had the intestinal fortitude to make that decision and take action.

For Mr. Peschisolido, I appreciate that he came the furthest, even further than I did, but assuming that the rail lines will act and that there are consequences if they don't... That's the whole issue, right? There aren't consequences if they don't. That's what we're asking for: to ensure that there are consequences.

The letter we need from the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture is about what definitive action, what steps, they are going to take. Let's say the March 15 deadline comes and CN and CP have tabled a plan, which they should have done months ago and should have taken action on: that isn't going to resolve the problem

in the immediate future. What actions are the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture going to take to get the grain moving? That is the critical question we're asking. As of right now, because we've voted down having those ministers appear as part of that meeting, we aren't going to know the answer to that, and I think it's vitally important that we have an action plan from cabinet that outlines what they are going to do to address the situation in the immediate future, not at some future point down the line.

Thank you.

Again, I want to thank my colleagues for making the trip here. I appreciate it.

● (1455)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barlow.

Madame Brosseau.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Thank you, Chair. I'm really hoping that we can do what was done in the past and what has happened often in the agriculture committee: we leave politics at the door. We come into this room and this committee and we put farmers' best interests at the forefront.

Once again, I think we need to remind, I guess, the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture of what they could do. As I said before, there were measures taken by the Conservative government in 2013 and 2014. The Minister of Transport could take those measures now to improve grain movement immediately. That's what people are looking at us to be doing. They're looking at us to find solutions. This is something that can be done today or tomorrow: writing a letter and making sure that we're reminding and putting pressure on the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture. It's something that will get things moving faster, hopefully. As for writing to the Senate, as you well know, the senators are not working this week and next week. Then they are back, and we are back and sitting on the 19th.

There is a sense of urgency, and I think everybody around this table can agree that action needs to be taken. I guess my concern is, why is there such a push-back from members on the other side of the table? Why are you so reticent—almost afraid—to put pressure on these ministers to act? I remember the Conservatives back in the day. We all worked together. Even when they were in government, we found common ground and we came to an agreement.

I would like to remind my colleagues on the other side that you have a job to do, and a responsibility. You have to put pressure on your own government and the ministers. I'm hoping that we can agree unanimously to write a letter to the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture asking them to immediately take up all the tools that are available to them. If they do go ahead with an order in council and penalties and if grain is not moving in an appropriate manner, it's time to take out the big stick. I think we're at a point where there is no choice. I'm hoping to have agreement from the Liberals on the other side.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Brosseau.

Mr. Peschisolido.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Mr. Chair, I agree wholeheartedly with Monsieur Berthold and Monsieur Barlow—Madame Brosseau is no longer part of the committee—that our role as members of the parliamentary committee on agriculture and agribusiness is an important one. We've all flown back here: the five members on the government side or the Liberal Party, and two of the opposition members. The other two couldn't make it. We all came back because this is a serious situation.

We're going to meet again on the 19th for four hours, and I believe that we have put pressure on the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture, because they have reacted. We'll see what occurs with the rail lines, but we'll see.... Our stakeholders, our farmers, have said, "You know what, committee members, let's act." They've said that by the 15th they want a plan. They want to know how we're going to get rid of this backlog, and then, moving forward, how we're going to have a systemic, holistic approach to make sure this doesn't happen again.

It's a work in progress, a step forward, but we've done our part as a committee, and I think we have put pressure on the ministers. They've acted. We'll see in the next few days how the rail lines will

react. I think the first reaction from CN has been positive, but time will tell. If they don't act accordingly, then I'm sure other things will occur. As a committee, we've done our work. Once again, I'd like to commend the two members from the floor who asked for this special committee meeting.

I think it's a work in progress.

I see that it's three o'clock, Mr. Chair, and I'm not sure if I can continue—

● (1500)

The Chair: The time has expired, and unless there is a request to continue, I will have to suspend until the following meeting.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Chair, I think it's urgent.

Can we agree, at least, to write a letter to the ministers? No? There is no agreement on the other side?

The Chair: It looks as though we don't have agreement, so we shall suspend until the next meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <http://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.noscommunes.ca>