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Tuesday, May 30, 2017

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Chair

The Honourable Judy A. Sgro

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

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• (1110)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)): I am calling to order meeting number 61 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities of the 42nd Parliament.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(5), we will consider supplementary estimates (A), 2017-18: vote 1a under Canadian Air Transport Security Authority; votes 1a, 5a, and 20a under Department of Transport; vote 1a under Marine Atlantic Inc.; and vote 1a under VIA Rail Canada Inc., referred to the committee on Thursday, May 11.

On behalf of the Department of Transport, we have before us Mr. André Lapointe, assistant deputy minister for corporate services and chief financial officer, along with Mrs. Natasha Rascanin, assistant deputy minister for programs.

From the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, we have Mr. Neil Parry, acting president and chief executive officer, along with Ms. Andie Andreou, vice-president and chief financial officer.

From VIA Rail Canada Inc., we have Mr. Jacques Fauteux, director of government and community relations, and Ms. Danielle Boisvert, corporate controller, by teleconference from Montreal.

Finally, on behalf of Marine Atlantic Inc., we have Mr. Paul Griffin, president and chief executive officer.

Welcome to all of you on behalf of the committee.

I'll start the discussion by calling vote 1a under Canadian Air Transport Security Authority.

Mr. Lapointe, it's over to you for five minutes.

Mr. André Lapointe (Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer, Corporate Services, Department of Transport): Actually, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Mrs. Rascanin.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin (Assistant Deputy Minister, Programs, Department of Transport): Thank you.

Thank you to the committee for the invitation to be here today.

We are very pleased to come here to address supplementary estimates (A) for 2017-18.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada recognizes that now, more than ever, we need a safe and secure transportation system for a healthy and competitive economy. Efficient, safe and secure transportation systems and environmental responsibility are important priorities for Transport Canada.

[English]

A strong economy and a clean environment go hand in hand. Marine transportation is fundamental to Canada's economic well-being. Our ports and marine corridors are increasingly active, sending Canadian products overseas and receiving goods from around the world.

In 2017-18, the supplementary estimates include \$50.9 million to assist Transport Canada in delivering on the oceans protection plan. This funding is part of a broader, five-year, \$1.5-billion whole-of-government strategy comprising over 50 initiatives that Transport Canada is implementing with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Natural Resources Canada.

[Translation]

The measures under the oceans protection plan are progressive, proactive, and urgently needed. The oceans protection plan represents the most significant investment ever made to protect Canada's oceans and coastlines from the potential impacts of marine shipping. This national plan will ensure the health of our oceans for generations to come.

[English]

The oceans protection plan was built on four fundamental elements: one, building a world-leading marine safety system; two, preserving and restoring Canada's marine environment; three, strengthening indigenous partnerships; and four, investing in science for evidence-based decision-making.

In addition to improving marine safety and protecting marine ecosystems, the oceans protection plan sets the frame toward meeting the Government of Canada's commitments to improve marine safety and to work with the provinces, the territories, indigenous peoples, and other stakeholders to better co-manage Canada's three oceans.

The funding from the supplementary estimates that we are seeking the committee's approval of today will assist in advancing initiatives to respond to community issues related to marine traffic, develop training programs to increase the participation of indigenous community members and women in marine safety jobs, increase inspections in northern communities, develop a comprehensive strategy for vessels of concern, and undertake work to create a pilot baseline monitoring program to better understand the cumulative effects of shipping on coastal ecosystems.

[*Translation*]

We'll contribute to the Government of Canada reconciliation agenda by actively working with and providing funding to indigenous and local communities. The goal is to encourage the effective participation of these communities and increase their capacity to engage and share their knowledge and expertise during the development and improvement of Canada's marine transportation system.

[*English*]

The initiatives under the oceans protection plan demonstrate that Transport Canada is working to maintain a transportation system that is safe, secure, efficient, and environmentally responsible. This ambitious plan will also help advance other federal priorities such as strengthening evidence-based decision-making, protecting the environment, and enhancing economic growth.

That concludes my remarks, Madam Chair. My colleagues from the portfolio, my colleague from Transport Canada, and I would be happy to answer questions from the committee.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Go ahead, Mr. Parry.

Mr. Neil Parry (Acting President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Air Transport Security Authority): Thank you, Madam Chair.

We are also pleased to answer any questions regarding supplementary estimates (A).

This funding will enable CATSA to continue to deliver effective and efficient screening of persons who access aircraft or restricted areas through screening points, the property in their possession or control, and the belongings or baggage given to an air carrier for transportation.

CATSA's mandate consists of four areas of aviation security. One is the pre-board screening of passengers. This is the screening of passengers and their belongings prior to their entry into a restricted area of the airport. The second is hold baggage screening, also known as checked baggage screening, which is the screening of passengers' baggage to prevent the boarding of prohibited items.

Our mandate also includes a non-passenger screening program. This is the screening of non-passengers or airport workers accessing restricted areas at the highest risk airports in Canada.

We are also responsible for the restricted area identity card program. This program uses iris and fingerprint biometric identifiers to allow non-passengers access into the restricted areas of the airport.

Supported by our screening contractors and the screening officer workforce, we expect to screen more than 63 million passengers and their belongings in this fiscal year, 2017-2018.

As noted, I am here with my colleague Andie Andreou, chief financial officer for CATSA.

With that, I'll leave it there. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We have VIA Rail by teleconference.

Mr. Jacques Fauteux (Director, Government and Community Relations, VIA Rail Canada Inc.): Madam Chair, I'm Jacques Fauteux, the the director of government relations for VIA Rail.

VIA Rail doesn't have any specific statements to make other than to note that, with respect to the supplementaries (A), they provide stable operational capital and pension funding for us to keep serving more Canadians in a more fiscally responsible way.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Griffin, for Marine Atlantic, go ahead please.

Mr. Paul Griffin (President and Chief Executive Officer, Marine Atlantic Inc.): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the invitation. It's good to be back in front of the committee again.

Just to remind the committee, Marine Atlantic is responsible for, on behalf of the Government of Canada, providing a constitutionally mandated service between the island of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

We run a year-round service between Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, and North Sydney, Nova Scotia, along with a seasonal service between Argentia, Newfoundland, and North Sydney, Nova Scotia.

Our mission is to provide a safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible service. We run a fleet of four very large ice class vessels. We own three of those vessels, and we charter a fourth.

Each year we carry more than 300,000 passengers, close to 100,000 commercial units, trucks, and close to 100,000 passenger vehicles as well.

In terms of current service indicators, they are all very positive. Our on-time performance is over 90%. Our vessel reliability is running at about 99%. Most importantly, customer satisfaction is in the 75% range.

In budget 2017, the government announced funding of \$445 million to support Marine Atlantic's operations over a three-year period. In 2017-2018 that funding will be utilized at \$90 million for operations and \$45 million for capital.

That amount of funding over the three-year period including 2017 and 2018 will allow us to meet our constitutional mandate and, most important, will allow us to continue to provide a level of service to our customers that is adequate and they feel is necessary.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you all very much.

I appreciate the fact that you were quite succinct with your comments, which allows for additional questioning by members.

Mrs. Block, you have six minutes, please.

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

I'd like to welcome all of you here to committee. I know there are a broad range of issues embedded within our supplementary estimates.

I have a number of questions that I'd like to ask, but I'm going to turn my time over to my colleague Alain Rayes.

•(1120)

The Chair: Mr. Rayes, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Thank you, Ms. Block.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here.

I want to take another look at an issue that's very important to me. I know the witnesses spent a lot of time preparing their appearance before us. However, I need to follow up on a situation that occurred here the week before the break. The issue is as important as the one we're discussing today. I'm talking about the Canada Infrastructure Bank. The issue, which we studied here for only an hour and a half, involves \$35 billion in public funds. That's taxpayers' money.

Madam Chair, I'm following up on the issue because, when I talked about it, you weren't here, unfortunately. I think you were directly linked to my dissatisfaction regarding this issue. I can take the opportunity to summarize the situation.

On Thursday, May 4, you received, on our behalf, a letter from the Standing Committee on Finance. The letter indicated the following:

The Standing Committee on Finance is currently studying the subject matter of Bill C-44, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures. Please find attached a series of motions adopted by the Standing Committee on Finance on Wednesday, May 3 ...

I'll skim over this part of the letter. It went on to say the following:

The motions that were adopted also invite your Committee, if it deems appropriate, to provide us with recommendations ...

Madam Chair, I want to specify that I'm currently talking about the motion I tabled. My colleagues across the way closed the debate on this motion, and I want to resume it. As the clerk explained, the second part of the motion was admissible.

Do people still need a copy of the letter?

If not, may I continue, Madam Clerk?

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): You may continue.

Mr. Alain Rayes: I want us to resume debating this motion and to have the opportunity to discuss the very important issue of the Infrastructure Bank.

Madam Chair, you were addressed by the chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, who invited the committee to provide

recommendations and amendments, as appropriate. The letter specified the following:

Accordingly, the Parliamentary Counsel ... Nathalie Caron ... as well as the Legislative Clerk, Justin Vaive ... are available to advise your Committee, respectively, on the drafting of amendments and their admissibility.

I think the Standing Committee on Finance's message was quite clear.

The letter also said the following:

Therefore, I invite you to send me the Committee's recommendations, including any suggested amendments, by letter, in both official languages, no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 19, 2017.

It was the Friday before the break week, when we returned to our respective constituencies. I'll skip this part.

To my surprise, upon my return, I learned that you wrote a letter to the chair of the Standing Committee on Finance on our behalf. I was personally insulted, since I never felt that I was consulted regarding the matter.

I'll read the letter you sent.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Rayes, can I interrupt you for a second? I just want to make sure that we are following everything appropriately.

If you want to resume the debate, we must have a vote on that. It's neither debatable nor amendable. I would have to call for a vote for us to move to another order of business, rather than the business that's in front of us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I rise on a point of order.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mrs. Block, go ahead.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Chair, he moved his motion again because it was adjourned in the last meeting. Does that have to be agreed upon, if he moved his motion?

The Chair: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Therefore, we don't need to vote to resume the debate. We can simply resume it?

[*English*]

The Chair: It's neither debatable nor amendable that we move to an order of business other than what we have in front of us. If you want to go back and resume the debate from the previous meeting, then we have to have a vote to do that. This is the information I am getting from the clerk.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Can we—

[*English*]

The Chair: If you want to move that we resort to the previous business we were dealing with and resume debate on it, then it's essentially a dilatory motion that the committee proceed to another order of business, which is non-debatable and non-amendable.

Is that what you are moving, Mr. Rayes, that we resume the debate we were having last Thursday?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: These are technical details. I don't know whether the clerk can answer me.

I tabled a motion, and my goal is for us to debate the motion. The government members ended the discussion before we reached an agreement. They took all the necessary steps to make that happen. My motion concerns an extremely important matter. Someone spoke on our behalf. I want to know my options so that I can continue the process in order to have my motion passed. I consider that this privilege was taken away from me when the debate was closed. According to my information, I think I have the power to continue the process in order to have my motion passed.

I don't know what I must do exactly. The process seems vague. I'm asking the clerk to clarify whether I can move forward with my motion, either as part of a debate or some other way. I have no idea.

• (1125)

[*English*]

The Chair: It became a motion of the committee, and the committee did not support your continuing. If you want to move a motion now that we go back and resume the debate, we will have to have a vote on it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, my motion was never voted on. I was never able to have the motion voted on. I want to know why I can table a motion without having it voted on. All I want is to explain the meaning of my motion and the reasons for it. That's all. I don't see what would prevent us from debating the motion and then voting on it.

I don't know whether you're aware of this, but we're currently in a situation where someone spoke on behalf of the committee, an independent committee. I'm tabling a motion because I want to continue discussing an issue—

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): A point of order, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: I don't think we can rise on a point of order in this regard, at this time. I want us to debate the matter that interests me.

[*English*]

The Chair: Hold on, Mr. Rayes.

Okay.

Mr. Vance Badawey: On a point of order, Madam Chair, under the rules, this is a dilatory motion, and he has every right to put this motion forward to resume debate. It's non-debatable, which is what he's doing right now. He is debating it. The recommendation would be to put this to the floor for a vote, and then carry on from there.

Once again, it's a dilatory motion.

The Chair: According to all of the rules, it's non-debatable and non-amendable, Mr. Rayes.

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

The Chair: We will resume the discussion, Mr. Rayes, on the work that's before us here, the supplementary estimates (A).

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: I'll give the floor to my colleague, Ms. Block.

[*English*]

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

I'm somewhat concerned. When the governing members choose to adjourn a debate, I always understood that the motion can be reintroduced at another time, but I respect the ruling of the chair and the advice of the clerk.

I know we have a number of motions on the table. I want to apologize to the folks at the table today, because I think that what we are doing on this side of the table is trying to ensure that the voices of opposition members are heard when we're dealing with very important things, when we hear from witnesses who come to committee to provide us with testimony that is meant to give all members an opportunity to hear the facts. Then we can make decisions based on what we've heard. I know we're here to discuss supplementary estimates (A), but I guess I have no choice, Madam Chair, but to move my motion that was distributed to members on February 22, 2017, as follows:

That the Committee invite the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to discuss the positive and negative impacts of the new federal carbon pricing strategy on the transportation sector.

I would like to give my rationale for that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I have received a number of questions and comments from nearly every transportation sector stakeholder I have met concerning the carbon pricing scheme announced by the Prime Minister. I have asked many questions, in every forum possible, on whether the government had even considered the impact of this tax on transport, agriculture, manufacturing, home heating, potash, oil and gas, and the list goes on, before the announcement was made. All of our questions to date have been ignored by the government.

It's obvious to those of us on this side of the table that they don't actually know what the impact of this tax will be on these sectors and that they will go ahead with it regardless. The Minister of Environment even acknowledged that the government had not done any analysis of how this new tax will impact Canada's competitiveness relative to the United States, and the other countries our exporters compete against, before mandating this tax. I will quote the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change: "We have committed with the Prime Minister, working with the finance minister, [to] doing a review of competitiveness and review of carbon pricing to look at this issue, because I think it is really important going forward."

We also still have no information on how this carbon tax will affect marine shippers that operate between countries and carry the flag of convenience of a country without carbon pricing, and, more relevant for Canadian consumers, how interprovincial flights will be affected, as provinces will not be able to tax these.

According to a witness as the Senate of Canada's energy, environment and natural resources committee, Canadians must cut emissions by some 208 million tonnes in order to meet the Paris Accord climate targets—which is more than that produced by all road vehicles in Canada.

This is a very tall order. It is incumbent on the federal government to learn from carbon pricing mistakes being made both at home and in other parts of the world. The failed environmental policies of the Ontario provincial government of Premier Wynne have resulted in the most expensive electricity prices in North America. It is chasing thousands of businesses and job creators out of the province. The Minister of the Environment must come to this committee to assure committee members and the transportation sector that the outcome of this federal tax will not be the same on the transport sector as Ontario's has been on every single sector of its economy.

The transport sector is very price sensitive. Canadian railways compete with U.S. railroads and U.S. trucking. Airlines, which already lose five million passengers per year to border airports, compete with international carriers. Small remote communities disproportionately rely on transportation for basic necessities like food. Even a small change in the cost of transport within this country will have huge ripple effects across the entire economy.

I don't believe that increasing the overall tax burden on Canadians will achieve the desired long-term emissions reductions, and will only serve to exacerbate the economic challenges that our country faces. I don't need to mention that the transportation sector will be one of the most affected by this new tax, so I think the environment minister's visit to this committee is critical.

The environment minister's contention that this initiative will be revenue neutral is somewhat hard to believe, and I look forward to hearing the supporting evidence for that. It is hard to believe that a policy that could increase the federal government's accounts receivables by over \$40 billion each year can be revenue neutral. This will become the second-largest source of federal revenue going forward, putting it ahead of the sales tax, the corporate income tax, the customs import duties, employment insurance premium revenues, and crown corporation revenues.

I also think that this motion is timely because Environment and Climate Change Canada recently released a technical paper called "Federal Carbon Pricing Backstop". I will just quote from the document: "The backstop will also supplement (or 'top-up') systems that do not fully meet the benchmark. For example, the backstop could expand the sources covered by provincial carbon pollution pricing or it could increase the stringency of the provincial carbon price."

• (1130)

This motion would give the minister an opportunity to provide more detail to this committee on the technical paper. I do hope that the members opposite will vote in favour of the motion and invite the

minister of the Environment and Climate Change to come to speak to how this major government initiative will impact the transportation sector, in which we are typically taking on a number of issues.

In closing I want to thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to table this motion.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Block. Certainly, in spite of the fact that we have a room full of people to discuss supplementary estimates, it is your right to be able to move it. You have given plenty of notice.

Now I will have to open up the floor for debate on Ms. Block's motion.

Mr. Berthold.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm also interested in discussing the motion of my colleague, Ms. Block. The motion reads as follows:

That the Committee invite the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to discuss the positive and negative impacts of the new federal carbon pricing strategy on the transportation sector.

I want to join my colleague in thanking the people who are here to discuss supplementary estimates (A). I understand that the current situation is quite unusual. We must discuss the motion of my colleague, Ms. Block, instead of asking the witnesses very interesting questions. I had a number of good questions to ask. However, as you know, this situation stems from a recent event. As a result of the event, today we're trying to understand how this committee works. I was particularly surprised about the committee's reaction to the desire to resume the debate on the motion. Since my colleague's motion had already been given 48 hours' notice, normally, we should have been able to simply continue the adjourned debate without another notice or decision. I think we'll need to ask for further clarifications on the matter.

Let's talk about the impact of the new federal carbon pricing strategy on the transportation sector. I've had the chance to meet many people in recent weeks and months. You know the Conservative Party had a leadership race. Last weekend, I found out who my new leader would be, the new leader of the opposition. He's a fine person from western Canada, specifically Saskatchewan. Andrew Scheer was resoundingly elected. I'm especially pleased about how all Conservative Party members have rallied behind him. When we conduct a campaign to lead a federal party, we travel to all provinces and speak to people, citizens, heads of companies and business leaders. During the campaign, which gave us a leader for the 2019 election, one of the most common topics of discussion was how the carbon tax would affect the transportation sector. Many citizens asked me what the pricing would change in their daily lives and how much it would cost their family and businesses. They wanted to know whether it would affect their job.

I'll use the example of a middle-class family in Saskatchewan. I chose Saskatchewan completely randomly, not to flatter my colleague, Kelly Block, but only as an example. Let's take the example of a normal family that goes grocery shopping, that must heat the house, and that buys vehicles to get around and to commute to work. Essentially, the impact of carbon pricing will be felt during basic daily activities, starting with grocery shopping. From now on, a tax will be imposed on fuel, which the family needs to travel to the grocery store. A tax will also be imposed on the fuel required to transport the family's groceries. The tax will increase the cost of buying these essential products. Everyone will agree that a family must purchase food. Therefore, the impact is direct.

This tax will also affect the cost of heating homes in Saskatchewan, among other things. Families will need to pay more for heating at the end of the month. An even greater portion of their income will be used not to put food on the table or improve their quality of life, but to pay a carbon tax for heating, an essential need.

On that note, I want to acknowledge the official opposition leader's excellent suggestion of removing taxes from all home heating services.

You know, in Canada, it's not really a choice to heat your home. It's essential. When we live north of the 45th parallel, winter is quite harsh. We need heating. However, the carbon tax will directly affect what citizens, including the small family in Saskatchewan, have left in their pockets at the end of the year.

● (1140)

That's not all. We can talk about groceries, but there's also clothes shopping. In short, my example can apply to all the purchases of the small family in Saskatchewan. In the end, the impact of the new federal carbon pricing strategy on the transportation sector will result in higher taxes payable to the government.

Since I've been here and since we've been working on the committee, it has been clear that transportation lies at the heart of Canadian society. We can all agree on this. Without transportation, there's no organization on the land. Canada is a very large country. If we can't transport goods and people in the country, we'll have a major problem. We've organized our society around transportation. Western Canada was developed as a result of the railway system expansion.

Transportation is part of our daily lives. We all have one, two or three cars, especially if we live in a rural region and we don't have access to public transportation. In that case, we must have cars.

I find this situation somewhat depressing. Since there's no public transportation service in Thetford Mines, as soon as our children are old enough to obtain a driver's licence, the first thing they ask for is access to a vehicle to go to cégep, go out at night and on the weekend, or go out with friends. My oldest is 20 years old, and he has his own vehicle. My youngest is 14 years old, and she dreams of having her own vehicle. I've also just bought a vehicle for my 16-year-old daughter, who recently obtained her driver's licence.

Transportation plays an essential role in the lives of families and all Canadians. Unfortunately, this new federal carbon pricing strategy in the transportation sector will directly affect the family budget, and my children's budgets. They may have a means of transportation to get around. However, they won't necessarily have enough money to buy gas. It will have a double impact. They won't be able to pay the carbon taxes for gas, since they simply won't have enough money to fill up their vehicle.

The impact is real, and it concerns the very heart of Canadians, meaning their families.

I haven't yet had the chance to address how the carbon tax will affect small and medium-sized businesses in rural regions such as mine.

At home, in Thetford Mines, a relatively large SME manufactures all the bases used at the BIXI self-service stations to park bicycles. We see them everywhere, in particular in Montreal and Toronto. Another part of the stations is manufactured in the Trois-Rivières area, and other parts are manufactured in various different places. Therefore, the components of these BIXI facilities, which are found in Montreal and the other major centres, come from regions across Canada.

● (1145)

You will understand that the number of docking stations for BIXI bikes manufactured by this company greatly exceeds the needs of our city, Thetford Mines. The stations manufactured in Thetford Mines are probably made from Canadian aluminum from either the Baie-Comeau or the Lac-Saint-Jean region. The aluminum used was probably trucked in to Thetford Mines. Unfortunately, we don't have a railway system in Thetford Mines. Those raw materials shipped to Thetford Mines and turned into BIXI docking stations to help people to adopt a healthier lifestyle in major centres have also been subject to an additional tax, a carbon tax. Those stations then have to be shipped to Montreal.

You see, imposing a tax on transportation has negative repercussions.

My colleague's motion requests:

That the Committee invite the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to discuss the positive and negative impacts of the new federal carbon pricing strategy on the transportation sector.

I would really like the minister to tell us what that carbon tax will cost families, young people, small and medium-sized businesses, larger businesses and society as a whole.

We requested those figures. My colleague Pierre Poilievre, who filed access to information requests, received documents that were unfortunately completely blacked out. We couldn't read anything. I think the government is afraid of us learning the true cost of the federal carbon pricing strategy for Canadian families.

When someone really believes in an idea, a principle, a project or what they want to do, they don't need to black out documents; they act in a transparent manner and provide people with figures. Canadians can then decide whether or not the carbon tax is a good initiative.

During the latest Conservative leadership campaign, which I mentioned earlier, one of our candidates was in favour of the carbon tax. His arguments were interesting to hear. However, the right information must be provided before any debate takes place. I think that is essential.

Has the Minister of Environment and Climate Change had access to that information? Has she seen the figures prepared by the Department of Finance on the real cost of the federal carbon pricing strategy? That is the question we are asking, and I think rightly so.

Were those documents just as censored for cabinet members and government MPs? Did the members of the Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities have access to those figures? Before this decision by cabinet and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change was supported, did the minister present all the facts to government MPs? I think that is a good question. We can be misled when we make decisions without having all the necessary data.

It's like an election campaign. To get elected, promises are made of very small deficits, only for three years, followed by a return to a balanced budget in the fourth year. In the fourth year, the election year, they tell people not to worry and that they will have....

• (1150)

[English]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): I have a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: With all due respect to my colleague, I want to point out that we are not discussing the election campaign and so on. I think that my colleague should stick to the motion, which concerns carbon tax in transportation.

So I respectfully ask the member to discuss the motion, and not other issues, such as what was said during the campaign or what must be done during a campaign. I don't think that is relevant.

Mr. Luc Berthold: So I will continue, Madam Chair.

During the election campaign, the Liberal Party promised very small deficits. Last week, the figures indicated that the deficit would be \$21 billion.

[English]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Madam Chair.

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Iacono.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Again, the member is talking about deficits, but that is not what we are currently discussing. The motion does not pertain to deficits, but rather to carbon tax. So he should talk about that.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much. Mr. Berthold has the floor, unless something else is said, it's his privilege to speak. If he wants to continue speaking, he's entitled to do that because he's speaking to the motion.

[Translation]

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

So I was saying that, during the election campaign, the Liberals promised very small deficits of about \$10 billion. We recently learned that the deficit for the current year would exceed \$20 billion.

To satisfy my colleague who is wondering why I am talking about deficits, I would say that it's because certain factors lead to those deficits. What are those factors? They are quite simply unreasonable government expenditures. How will those unreasonable expenditures be repaid? By imposing a carbon tax on Canadians. So there is a direct link to the Liberals' promises to create very small deficits.

In reality, the deficit will exceed \$21 billion this year. The Liberals are hungry and are trying to get as much money as possible anywhere they can to deal with those huge deficits. The carbon tax will be used to pay for the interest on the Liberals' credit card, which unfortunately doesn't seem to have a limit.

I could compare that to a family with a young child. This is in fact a young government of only 18 months that has access to credit and suddenly decides that it is wonderful to have a credit card without a spending limit and not to have to pay back the debt for another 30, 40 or 50 years. To hell with spending. They get into it, they spend and they will see later. Others will have to manage the debt. The children of our children will have to manage it.

However, a few people see things more clearly and tell themselves that borrowing is fine and well, but we have to at least pay back the interest on the credit card. The carbon tax, which is supposedly a tax to help protect the environment, is actually nothing but a way the Liberals have found to get even more money out of the pockets of taxpayers, families, SMEs and big companies to handle those large deficits.

When the Minister of Environment and Climate Change appears before the committee, she could answer those questions. Did she take action to improve the environment, to work on climate change, or did she simply react to an order from the Minister of Finance, who was unable to find funds anywhere other than in taxpayers' pockets? How to find money and make people pay by giving them the impression that it's the right thing to do? By imposing a carbon tax to protect the environment.

However, a tax is still a tax. The money taken out of people's pockets is money they cannot use themselves. That limits the decisions they will make with regard to their budget or actions they will take to protect the environment. The means to take action are being taken away from them.

I want to come back to the example of very small deficits that have now become very large deficits. We now understand better why, when we asked the Department of Finance to provide us with details on the real costs of the new federal carbon pricing strategy for Canadian families, those figures come to us blacked out. We understand why department representatives have no interest in disclosing those figures. It is because they know full well that people will be shocked and insulted by the extent of the costs for families.

That obviously affects the transportation industry. Many changes have been made. Bill C-49, which has been introduced, will allow foreign companies greater participation in airlines' shareholder structures. Some companies are trying to provide the most affordable transportation services possible. Very recently, the media reported that there are significant differences in the costs of regional transportation, be it in Quebec or elsewhere in Canada. Airlines in particular are very worried about the competition they will see from foreign companies, especially when it comes to long flights, owing to the carbon tax they will have to pay on fuel. I heard that here during the meetings we had with airline representatives. Will we be hurting our airlines through these measures? I believe that question deserves to be asked.

•(1155)

Concerning airlines, we want to ask the Minister of Environment and Climate Change whether she has analyzed the repercussions of the carbon tax on the transportation sector. We want to know whether she has only considered the quantity of products sold and the quantity of carbon produced before imposing a tax in order to produce revenue, without looking into the effects the tax could have on companies' competitiveness or the accessibility of air transportation for middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join the middle class. We want to know whether the minister has assessed the effects on them, on their wallet, as well as on airline companies. The same reflection applies to transportation companies....

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Berthold—

Mr. Angelo Iacono: On a point of order—

The Chair: —excuse me for just a moment.

We have folks here for the supplementary estimates. Could we stop for a minute and either let the witnesses go or deal with the supplementary estimates and then resume, if that is your desire,

talking about this for the rest of the meeting? In fairness to the witnesses who are here, they should not be required to remain.

Is it the desire of the committee to move forward on the supplementary estimates that we have before us?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I just want to understand the situation, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: You are asking me whether we should ask the witnesses to leave and thereby miss the opportunity to hear my excellent speech?

[English]

The Chair: Well, I realize that, but—

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Can you tell me again exactly what you want us to do?

[English]

The Chair: My suggestion is this, Mr. Berthold. Clearly you feel you have a lot to say. We have witnesses sitting here who are clearly not going to get an opportunity to be asked questions. My suggestion is that if the committee desires, we could go ahead and vote on the supplementary estimates. This way the witnesses could then leave. You would still have the floor. We would go back to your having the floor.

The supplementary estimates will be automatically deemed approved if we do nothing, but we do have witnesses, and out of respect, if the committee has questions, we could take a few minutes to ask them of the witnesses who are here. If not, out of courtesy to the witnesses, I think we should let them go.

•(1200)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: That's a very good point, Madam Chair.

I simply want to establish a parallel in order to understand the situation. Earlier, we wanted to continue the discussion on Mr. Rayes' motion because we wanted to try to vote on it, but that vote never took place. You did not allow us to debate Mr. Rayes' motion. Now you are asking me to stop talking about that motion so that we can vote.

[English]

The Chair: Certainly I don't want you to close.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Okay.

[English]

The Chair: I look forward to it until 2 o'clock or whatever time you want to stop. I'm just saying that as a courtesy to the witnesses, there is no reason to insist that the witnesses stay on the supplementary estimates when clearly no one is interested in asking any questions. I think if it's within my jurisdiction to allow the witnesses to leave so that we're not tying up their time with other issues that are not related to why they are here before us, if I have the permission of the committee to....

Yes, Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, I think it should be said that we are debating this motion because we were not allowed to debate the motion on the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

[English]

The Chair: We know.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: It is important for Canadians to know this. Contrary to what has been suggested and what people may think, the fact that the witnesses are present is really useful to us. We have questions to ask about the supplementary estimates. I would have liked to talk about budget issues with representatives from the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority. We had some very good questions, which could have been entirely relevant in our ongoing study on aviation safety.

I wouldn't want people to think that we don't want to talk to the witnesses. Quite the opposite. We want to do that, but as the opposition party, we don't like to be gagged like we were last time. We wanted to talk about the motion on the Canada Infrastructure Bank, but the first time, the government members decided to adjourn the debate. As the opposition party, we have to protect our rights.

Moreover, I think that the people who are here know enough about public affairs to understand that we have a role to play as the opposition. Unfortunately, we had to take advantage of the opportunity that arose this morning, since we were not allowed to vote on my colleague's motion. I will have to find out what exactly happened.

Madam Chair, if you want to let the witnesses go, I completely agree. As for the vote on the credits, we could deal with it at the end of the intervention. I have no objection to that.

[English]

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

I'm going to thank the witnesses who are here and those by teleconference. My apologies, but clearly everyone enjoyed having you here.

Mr. Vance Badawey: This side did.

The Chair: I feel I have to clarify something for Mr. Rayes.

We dedicated Tuesday, our 16th meeting, the whole two hours, at your and finance's request, to deal with the infrastructure bank; and we had a two-hour block of time to do that. The following Thursday we already had the aviation study folks coming. By Friday, the finance committee wanted whatever answer was coming. We were

also told that we could move any amendments we wanted and send them directly to finance. The only time allotment for that, Mr. Rayes, was that Tuesday. There was some mix-up with the date and how it was sent out.

I apologize for whatever clerical issue happened.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Yes.

[English]

The Chair: There was no time to go back for another meeting to deal with the infrastructure bank because we were set to deal with aviation.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, I'd like to respond to what you just said.

There may have been a mixup in the date and clerical issues, but the fact remains that you wrote to the chair of the finance committee and said that our committee didn't have any recommendations. You never put the question to the committee members. I had a recommendation; I had it with me that Thursday. I even sent it afterwards, as that was the only way it would get submitted. I didn't have the opportunity to make that recommendation in committee, as I should have.

[English]

An hon. member: Yes you did.

An hon. member: No we did not.

• (1205)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: May I speak without constantly being interrupted? I'd like to finish speaking.

I believe it was partly because of them that I didn't have the opportunity to discuss my motion or have it voted on. The arrogance is not coming from over here.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Rayes, with due respect, you should have moved those amendments on the Tuesday when we had the folks here and we had a two-hour block of time to deal with the infrastructure bank. We specifically allocated two hours so that the committee would have the time—you, in particular, because I recognized your interest.

The issue of the date on the letter was a clerical one, but it didn't change your ability to submit your amendments, which I understand you have done. The committee was not hamstrung and members prevented from submitting their amendments individually.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Chair.

The Chair: I apologize for whatever mix-up there was—

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Chair—

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I think what you're saying is a little misleading in terms of what this committee was tasked to do. It's never understood that when a committee is tasked to look at a piece of legislation and go through it clause by clause.... I would assume that we would deal with that like any other piece of legislation referred to this committee. To purport that committees can just send their recommendations to the Minister of Finance when something has been referred to a committee—

Mr. Vance Badawey: I have a point of order.

Mrs. Kelly Block: We would make amendments or recommendations for changes to a piece of legislation that fell under our purview. We would not do that individually but as a committee. The informal structure this committee undertook, the two clauses that were sent to us by the finance committee...then we arrive here and find out that a letter has been sent that nobody saw, that nobody was asked about, yet we have nothing to say. These things are making this committee increasingly dysfunctional.

The Chair: I don't think the committee is dysfunctional, but—

Mrs. Kelly Block: I know you like to think that.

The Chair: This clause was referred to us by finance—not the legislation, but a clause of the legislation. It was referred to finance. Finance took the option of sending it to various committees if they wanted to contribute. In speaking with our members, they asked to contribute, especially Mr. Rayes. I had it on the agenda, and we allocated a two-hour block of time—

Mrs. Kelly Block: Who did?

The Chair: This committee did.

Mrs. Kelly Block: No. We never had any input into how much time was going to be spent on this piece of legislation.

The Chair: There were only two meetings, and we had to respond to finance on Friday.

Mrs. Kelly Block: The point is that we don't have any input into the agenda.

The Chair: We're supposed to be discussing the agenda, by the way.

Mr. Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): I'm lost. I'd like to know what we are talking about. I hear a discussion about the letter. I hear a discussion about how long the committee was supposed to have to study the Canada Infrastructure Bank. On top of that, Mrs. Block's motion is being discussed. What are we dealing with exactly? All the issues seem to be on the table at the same time. My sense is that we are really off track.

[*English*]

The Chair: I think so, because that's an issue we're having to deal with.

We're going to need to go back to Mr. Berthold. At this point, we are in open session. We were supposed to be dealing with committee business. What is the desire of the committee?

You have the floor, Mr. Berthold. If you choose to continue until one o'clock, that's up to the committee, but you'll have to continue to speak to the motion that Ms. Block put on the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, we should probably move on to committee business in order to plan out the work we have to do in the three weeks we have left. I wouldn't object to that. I think we absolutely have to talk about it to make sure our next few meetings run smoothly.

Even though I still have a number of pertinent comments about carbon pricing, I don't object to bringing the discussion on the motion to an end. I'm not sure whether my fellow members who had asked to speak will want to address the motion. I, however, have no qualms with ending the discussion so that we can move on to committee business.

● (1210)

[*English*]

The Chair: The next speaker is Mr. Iacono, speaking to the motion by Ms. Block.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: I move that this debate be adjourned, and that we pass to a vote.

Mr. Luc Berthold: That's why we will always do that.

The Chair: Mr. Iacono has moved that we adjourn the debate.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I'll go back to our agenda, to the supplementary estimates.

I need to ask the committee if members want to vote on the supplementary estimates, or do we allow them to continue?

Mr. Vance Badawey: Yes.

The Chair: All right.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, if I may—

Mr. Robert Aubin: The committee voted.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes, the committee voted on the motion to adjourn. That's all.

[*English*]

The Chair: I will now move the supplementary estimates we have before us.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(5)—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

You asked us whether we wanted to adjourn the debate and move right into committee business since it is past noon. You never said that you were going to put it to a vote. To my mind, that isn't the same thing at all.

[*English*]

The Chair: I just asked whether we would deal with the supplementary estimates before we go into committee business.

Do we have the approval of the committee to deal with the supplementary estimates?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Pursuant to Standing Order 81(5), the committee will now dispose of the supplementary estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018: vote 1a under Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, votes 1a, 5a, and 20a under Department of Transport, vote 1a under Marine Atlantic Inc., and vote 1a under VIA Rail Canada Inc.

Do I have unanimous consent to deal with all votes in one motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right.

CANADIAN AIR TRANSPORT SECURITY AUTHORITY
Vote 1a—Payments to the Authority for operating and capital expenditures.....
\$150,800,000

(Vote 1a agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
Vote 1a—Operating expenditures.....\$40,968,956
Vote 5a—Capital expenditures.....\$500,000
Vote 20a—Grants and contributions — Other.....\$9,384,841

(Votes 1a, 5a, and 20a agreed to on division)

MARINE ATLANTIC INC.
Vote 1a—Payments to the corporation.....\$134,920,000

(Vote 1a agreed to on division)

VIA RAIL CANADA INC.
Vote 1a—Payments to the Corporation.....\$235,397,834

(Vote 1a agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall I report these votes to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go into committee business in camera.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Chair, would it be necessary to go in camera, or can we stay in open session?

The Chair: It's the will of the committee. Are you suggesting that the committee not go in camera?

Mr. Vance Badawey: I suggest we stay in open session.

The Chair: Is everyone in favour of our doing this in open session?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: What we had on the schedule for the first half-hour was to do committee business, and for the second half-hour to do drafting instructions on the aviation study.

We are scheduled to have the Montreal airport for the first hour on Thursday, as you requested, Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes.

[*English*]

The Chair: They will be here for the first hour on Thursday. Thank you very much. I'm really glad when we can work together.

Now we have 15 minutes left to talk about committee business: what we have outstanding that's coming to us or that we still have to deal with.

We have Mr. Bratina's motion on water quality, which we have to deal with before December 1. We have a draft report on infrastructure that our analysts have done, which we have not gone back to review. We can take action on it, or we can simply leave it there until the fall, depending on the will of the committee on those two issues.

Legislation-wise, at some point we're going to have Bill S-2, Bill C-48, and Bill C-49. That's the legislative agenda ahead of us, over and above all the other issues that we'd like to deal with.

As we look forward to the committee business ahead of us, we should sort out how we're going to deal with some of it. Bill C-49 is a very important piece of legislation, given the fact that it affects the issue of the sunset clause in Bill C-30.

That's what's ahead of us. We need to sort out how we are going to get these issues dealt with in the couple of meetings we have left.

I'm going to open the floor.

Mr. Badawey, go ahead.

• (1215)

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I understand, from our discussions, that the government House leader has indicated a willingness to deal with Bill C-49 based on some of the comments made, both by the committee and by the opposition in the House of Commons, with respect to bringing it to second reading and getting it to this committee before the summer adjournment.

If this happens, I would propose that our committee meet to study Bill C-49 prior to the House's returning in the fall so we can attempt to expedite this—again, based on some of the comments we've heard here in the testimony, as well as comments made specifically by the opposition in the House of Commons.

Madam Chair, this would provide us with an opportunity to hold extended meetings with the stakeholders and do a lot of work in a relatively short period of time to deal with the issue, as was articulated by members of the opposition in the House. There is a need to expedite this because of the sunset clause attached to Bill C-30.

As part of our work program moving into the fall, that's what I would propose, and I think it would go a long way toward speeding up the process and delivering results for our grain farmers and other captive shippers who are eagerly awaiting the passage of this bill. It would certainly provide them with the service levels they expect.

As members of the committee understand, Bill C-49 also includes a number of other important measures, notably a passenger rights regime for air travellers. Our studying this is long overdue, as well as hearing from those who are being impacted dramatically by it.

Madam Chair, I would throw that out there for discussion. Hopefully, we can get to this sooner rather than later because of the expediency it well deserves and needs.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Rayes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to give notice and read the following motion:

That the Committee reserve a minimum of another complete meeting on the subject of the Canada Infrastructure Bank and invite the former Chair of the Business Development Bank of Canada to appear on the subject.

Now I'd like us to discuss the motion, please.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's a new motion, Mr. Rayes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Yes, it's a new motion. It's not an old motion. I was told that I could no longer speak to it, so I am introducing a new one. I'm glad we're doing this with the microphones and cameras on, thanks to my colleague across the way.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's fine. We're quite pleased to continue in public all the time.

You have given us notice of that motion. We can deal with it in 48 hours, unless there is unanimous consent to deal with that motion right now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Chair, we are in committee right now. Unless I'm mistaken, we can deal with the motion immediately, without notice.

Madam Clerk can correct me if I'm wrong.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: I want to read it in English.

The Chair: Mr. Rayes, we need 48 hours' notice for all motions.

Mr. Vance Badawey: I see it in French.

The Chair: The only way you could do that would be to get unanimous consent, I believe, from the committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: I agree, so I am asking the committee's permission to discuss my motion immediately. Otherwise, I would like us to deal with it in 48 hours.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: That's fine.

The Chair: We just have it verbally. We don't have it in both languages—we just have the interpreters.

Does Mr. Rayes have unanimous consent to introduce his motion?

Mr. Vance Badawey: No.

The Chair: And on this side?

No, you don't have unanimous consent, Mr. Rayes, but you will be able to move that motion at the next meeting.

Ms. Block.

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

I think what I would do is go back to Mr. Badawey's suggestion regarding Bill C-49. Just to be clear on what he is suggesting, the measures in Bill C-30 were due to sunset a year ago, and we extended them in the understanding that we would undertake a study on Bill C-30 and bring forward recommendations to the minister.

We undertook that study in September 2016. You reported our findings and recommendations to the House. The minister, then, has had our recommendations on the measures contained in Bill C-30 before him.

What Mr. Badawey is suggesting is that, because we are in this very tight time frame now to deal with these measures that are going to sunset on August 1, this committee now needs to study this legislation throughout the summer, perhaps holding wide consultations with stakeholders, which is what the minister told us he was doing when we tabled the report in the House between that time and now.

What's happening is that members are now being asked to consider meeting in the summer to expedite Bill C-49, which won't actually have any impact on the expiration of the measures in Bill C-30, because this bill will not be passed until the fall.

Is that correct?

• (1220)

The Chair: No matter what we do with Bill C-49, it cannot be passed until the House resumes.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Right.

The Chair: But by taking the time to do the work ahead of time... Otherwise, if we don't get started on this until September when our normal process starts, with two meetings a week on something as important as this, it's going to take us into December.

Mrs. Kelly Block: On that, what do you think they are going to do between August 1 and the time when legislation may be passed in October or November?

The Chair: To be able to bring forward C-49 and do it earlier than our normal schedule in September, the concern would be to get the witnesses and the 25 or 30 hours of testimony dealt with in a solid week—as Mr. Badawey suggested—so that we would get the bulk of those hearings on Bill C-49 done prior to the House's coming back. Once the House comes back, possibly at that time, the committee would be prepared to go to clause-by-clause.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Again, for clarification, you are asking this committee to extend its hours throughout the summer to work on legislation to help the government pass its legislation in a timely way in the fall.

The Chair: That's exactly what Mr. Badawey is suggesting because of the sensitivities of the C-30 clause. Now it's up to the committee.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Regarding those sensitivities, this bill sunsets on August 1, so what are we going to do about those sensitivities between August 1 and when the bill actually gets passed?

The Chair: You do all of the work with the witnesses, have all of the hearings, or as many as possible, so that when the House reconvenes, we would be able to go immediately into clause-by-clause and get that legislation adopted. I say this because the very people who will be most affected by the issue around Bill C-30 and the sunset clause are the farmers, who have concerns about the railways and their reaction.

It's a question of moving things along regardless of... You know how government works and how things do not always move as swiftly as you'd like. Mr. Badawey's suggestion is on whether the committee would be interested in putting forward three or four days, mid-September, before the House resumes, to get some of the witnesses in and to get some of the hearings done.

That's the suggestion.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Again, Madam Chair, I would just suggest that if there were a concern about the sensitivities around this legislation sunsetting on August 1, your government had all means necessary to put this legislation forward in a much more timely way and have it dealt with before these measures sunsetted. I'm not opposed to coming in to deal with this, but I think it should be noted that once again, the opposition is being called upon to go above and beyond to help the government of the day do its job because it didn't deem this piece of legislation worth dealing with before these clauses will sunset on August 1.

• (1225)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Block.

Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm really attempting to remove the politics from this discussion—although the opposition had 10 years to deal with this, and they didn't.

Mrs. Kelly Block: We did.

Mr. Vance Badawey: We're trying to deal with this in an expeditious manner—

Mr. Luc Berthold: We did well.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Excuse me.

The minister has, in fact, taken the time in the past few months since our last dialogue on this issue to have dialogue and consultation with the stakeholders. We're now at a point at which he now feels it's time, after that dialogue and consultation, to bring forward Bill C-49. The House leader has indicated that she would like to introduce it to the House for second reading in a timely fashion.

This, Madam Chairman, simply goes to this committee, as well as Ms. Block's interest in dealing with this issue, and we feel the same way. I'm proposing that we have a choice. We can stay on the schedule we have in place in terms of our time frame coming into this session and going into the new session in the fall, which would then put us back into the December, if not January, time frame.

What I'm attempting to do is expedite the time frame to hear the concerns of the stakeholders and to bring this forward sooner, coming back from our summer constituency time a week earlier. I believe we're supposed to be back in the House September 16 or 18, so we would be cutting that constituency time by one week—coming back to Ottawa one week earlier to get back to work. Doing this would expedite Bill C-49 and alleviate some of the concerns that are being raised by stakeholders such as the farmers on the Prairies.

The Chair: Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

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

I don't think anyone asked the minister to wait until June to begin the study of the bill in the House. It's a long and meaty bill. Bill C-49 is clearly an omnibus bill: there's something in it for everyone, including measures on grain transportation.

I think the committee members have done excellent work. We have gotten things done and responded quickly. The delay between the two should not be laid at the committee's feet. We would never do anything to delay the implementation of the measures in Bill C-30.

These people have been waiting, and once again, I would point out that it wasn't the committee that decided to wait until June to bring forward the bill. It's unfortunate; the government could have chosen another approach.

I would also like to hear what my fellow member and vice chair of the committee has to say about the situation. Here we are, in full committee, studying motions on committee business and other issues we need to talk about. We often find out about things at the last minute, however, so we don't have time to prepare or respond. Yet again, today, the schedule has been changed a few times.

As vice-chairs of the committee, not only were we elected by our peers, but we are also paid extra by the House to hold subcommittee meetings precisely to discuss scheduling and suggestions of this nature.

After the subcommittee meets, we are able to consult our colleagues about the committee's upcoming work—at least, that's what I would do. It would certainly be a better idea if we were to proceed that way more often, Madam Chair. It would give us an opportunity to learn about these types of intentions sooner and to find some common ground even before beginning our work with the entire committee present. The committee would run a lot more smoothly that way.

Using the subcommittee would also prevent situations like the one involving Mr. Rayes' request to resume debate on his motion. The subcommittee could've discussed it and realized that it wasn't possible. We could have done things the right way. It's unfortunate that we didn't.

When everything is going fine, we don't need to meet, but I think we need to talk and meet more often so as not to bring in witnesses unnecessarily or be caught off guard by proposals like this one at the last minute.

Mr. Badawey's suggestion that the committee meet when the House is not sitting didn't come out of nowhere. I think you talked about it amongst yourselves. The government party is aware of the idea, and you are getting ready to vote on it.

I'd like to hear what my colleague has to say. I think the subcommittee could help because it could resolve issues like these and ensure that the committee's proceedings ran smoothly.

• (1230)

[*English*]

The Chair: I have Mr. Badawey, and then Mr. Aubin.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Once again, I apologize for being repetitive. We've heard loud and clear the concerns of the farmers. We've been hearing them for past year and a half, going back to when we discussed this issue in the first place and dealt with it last year. Here we are, ready to deal with it again.

The minister has had a great dialogue and consultation with the stakeholders. We've heard loud and clear the concerns raised, especially by Saskatchewan farmers. The Saskatchewan farmers have brought their concerns to our attention, through their MPs, through, I'm sure, the new Leader of the Opposition, as well as through our MPs, including those on this committee.

Grain farmers do, in fact, want long-term certainty. This is what we're trying to put in place with this bill. With that, what I'm asking of the committee is for it to ensure that the rights of farmers are a priority, and therefore to deal with this issue sooner rather than later.

Yes, we can meet. I'm available all summer, quite frankly. Some might not want to hear that, but this is something that's a priority. If, in fact, we have to meet during the summer, if in fact we come back a week earlier, prior to the rising of the House in September, so be it.

Once again, I want to reiterate, Madam Chair, that grain farmers do want long-term certainty, and they want their rights to be a priority. This is, in fact, our intent. This is, in fact, what my recommendation is, to bring that forward for those very reasons.

Again, on Bill C-49, the intent is to bring it to the House for second reading, and therefore for us not to have to deal with it upon the rise of the House in September, and then have it go into December and possibly even the new year's timeline, which was proposed originally.

We can, in fact, if we start work earlier, deal with this earlier, and then have that certainty brought forward in an expeditious manner. That, quite frankly, is what I'm requesting, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are you doing that by a motion?

Mr. Vance Badawey: No, I'm proposing it for discussion right now. I don't think it should have to be put forward as a motion.

We've heard loud and clear from around the table that, again, and I'll simply cite Ms. Block's own comments in the House, that grain farmers want exactly what I'm saying. Grain farmers want long-term certainty. It's up to us to focus on bringing that and the rights of the farmers forward as a priority.

In fact, the opposition has quite clearly stated so in the House. I'm sure they're still of the same opinion, and we agree: let's bring that forward. Hopefully we can deal with this sooner rather than later.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to raise two issues.

The first has to do with how the committee functions.

With all due respect, Madam Chair, as much as I appreciate the miracles you have managed to work since I've been on the committee, I must say that our sense of collegiality seems to be slowly slipping away. It fades every time we meet.

Clearly, I think that if proper subcommittee meetings were held more often, it would help ease some of the tension we're seeing. I'm not trying to force anything on you, but that is what I would strongly suggest. I think the committee should favour that approach.

It would probably also help us iron out the bulk of our work plans and thus avoid surprises and frustrating situations like this morning's, not to mention what happened at a meeting you unfortunately weren't at, Madam Chair. I think that's one solution that would help the committee get back to its former self.

As for possibly having to work on Bill C-49 in the summer, I would simply say that, if we must, we must. That was never the issue. The argument is that farmers are a priority, and I agree with that. In terms of the measures in Bill C-30, keep in mind that the priority according to farmers—the message they were championing—was that they would be happy to see the measures made permanent. I'm having a hard time, then, wrapping my head around how the government party can claim this is an absolute priority that we need to deal with as quickly as possible, when it opted to insert the measures into an omnibus bill. I'm well aware that this isn't the right place to debate the matter, but I would just point out that, if this is indeed a priority, one solution would be to take the measures out of the mammoth bill that is Bill C-49. That way, the committee could study the measures in a timely manner and make everyone happy.

Instead, the government is trying to fast-track consideration of an omnibus bill that affects just about every sector of transportation, including grain transportation, which has a direct impact on farmers.

Truth be told, Bill C-49 could be divided into a number of bills. Even though the government has absolutely no intention of doing this, it seems to me that, if it wanted to give priority treatment to farmers, the best option would be to extract the provisions from Bill C-49 related to Bill C-30. It could then make Bill C-30 the priority and refer it to our committee. That way, we could deal with the matter expeditiously while following through on the government's wish to prioritize farmers and deliver the support they are expecting from us.

• (1235)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Aubin. I appreciate that.

We still have to discuss our drafting instructions for our aviation study. If it's the wish of the two vice-chairs to have a subcommittee meeting to discuss it, I just note that we stopped doing so because we couldn't get our schedules working. We were able to agree to add additional meetings for the aviation study and on infrastructure. So we have been functioning reasonably well.

My staff will reach out to my two vice-chairs, and we can have a further discussion as far as committee business is concerned. I would appreciate it if we could all manage to find the time to do that. My staff will be contacting your staff this afternoon to find an hour so that we can start to plan our future agenda, giving consideration to the comments on Bill C-49.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I'd like to get on the speakers list.

The Chair: We do have to give some direction and instructions to our folks here. We have one more meeting on the aviation study, and we would like to get a report tabled on that study, if possible, before the House rises.

Would the committee like to see all of the briefs submitted in response to the aviation study put on our transportation website? Is there agreement to post all of the briefs the committee has received?

An hon. member: Yes.

The Chair: We've done that with other studies. So my office will be contacting yours.

Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Given that we have at least another hour to hear from witnesses on the aviation safety study, and the sense of urgency that Mr. Badawey has highlighted in dealing with Bill C-49, I'm wondering if we could postpone the drafting instructions. We do have 20 minutes left to discuss my colleague's suggestion to carve out the measures in Bill C-49 to deal with that legislation in a much more timely way. We could discuss that for the remainder of the time today and figure out if that is something that could be done, and then seek to provide drafting instructions on the aviation safety study after we've heard from the final witnesses on Thursday.

The Chair: Well, we are scheduled to go back to finalizing our drafting instructions on Thursday, but the analysts have a fairly detailed amount of work in front of them for us to try to get this study. People keep talking in the media about Parliament being prorogued. I would not want to see us lose the good work that we've done on this aviation study if that were to happen.

We are going to have discussions on future business with the two vice-chairs. Whether or not the government is prepared to carve out something or another is something that I will have to ask it and get feedback on. My immediate understanding is that it's not possible, but I will be very accurate and get back to you on that when I have had that meeting—hopefully very soon—with the two vice-chairs.

• (1240)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Just in follow-up to that, is it the will of the committee to make a request of the minister and the government to carve out those measure that are creating a sense of urgency for us in looking at Bill C-49? Is it the will of the committee to ask for that?

The Chair: I don't know that yet. Let me go to my next speaker, and then we can get back to that.

Mr. Iacono.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: He's quiet.

[*English*]

The Chair: Let me just suspend for a second.

Mr. Iacono, you have the floor.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Yes, Madam Chair, my comments are on the drafting instructions. I want to concentrate on giving a heads-up to the analysts to start getting the report ready.

The Chair: Would you please speak to that?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: During our discussions on air safety, numerous subjects kept being repeated and highlighted, with the witnesses providing substantial examples. My colleagues agreed that the main subjects that were repeated during our study were the following: fatigue, training, inspections, the security management system, and security at airports.

Madam Chair, if you permit me, I would like to elaborate a bit more on each subject in order to guide the analysts.

With respect to fatigue, I'd say highlight and acknowledge that we had two different concerns expressed by the witnesses, that the proposition of Transport Canada be based on scientific evidence and that the primary concern should be safety, and that the proposed one-size-fits-all approach worries some transporters.

On training, we heard from a variety of witnesses that training, whether for pilots, inspectors, or specialized workers in the aerospace industry, is key—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Point of order, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Is that a point of order, Mr. Berthold?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Somewhat, yes.

We were in the middle of discussing committee business, and Mrs. Block had clearly asked a question about making a request to the minister and government. Seeing the people on the other side of the table go back and forth about whether they would give an answer, you decided to suspend for a quick break. We never got an answer to the question, and now here we are talking about an altogether different topic.

[English]

The Chair: We're supposed to be dealing with the drafting instructions. It went in a different direction. When I went to the next speaker on the list, you asked a question but I had a speakers list. I went back to my speakers list, which had Mr. Iacono as next. He is speaking to what he wanted to speak about, which is what we were supposed to talk about, which is the drafting instructions for the aviation report.

Mr. Iacono, you have the floor.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, Mr. Badawey brought it up and you asked our opinion.

[English]

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

Mr. Iacono has the floor. He's speaking to the issue that's before us.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In going back to the second subject, which is training. We heard from a variety of witnesses that training, whether for pilots, inspectors, or specialized workers in the aerospace industry, is the key to ensuring a safe and secure air transportation service. We should highlight the different recommendations we heard on the importance of training.

As to inspections and SMS, we also heard a great deal of comments about SMS and how it actually helped air safety become safer and safer over the years. The majority of the witnesses agreed that all operators should have a safety management system. There were concerns expressed about the inspections, the quality and types of inspections, the duration in-between inspections, the data collected during the inspections, and also the number of inspectors who are now allocated to doing these inspections.

Although Transport Canada assured us that they were doing proper regulation, oversight and inspections, there seemed to be some questions on this. This should also be reflected in the report, that is, how often the inspections are being done and the number of personnel available to conduct these inspections.

When it came to security in airports, everything we heard during that meeting was really reassuring. All the witnesses had the same opinion, that the system in place is working properly—I'm grateful to say that, because if some incidents occurred a couple of weeks

ago, it's because the system in place presently is functioning—and that all agencies involved are working well together. That, too, is important to highlight, in making make our airports secure. Rest assured that it's never enough, because we always have to be ahead of our game when it comes to airport security.

We also heard about the financing of CATSA. That was another criterion.

We look forward to the other comments of the Montreal police.

I think this can give the analysts a good sense of the direction we would like to see the report be drafted in.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1245)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Is there any further discussion on the drafting instructions?

Monsieur Aubin, this was your study.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I almost had a point of order, but now that it's my turn, I'm going to ask you my question.

When we instruct the analysts, are we allowed to express a certain direction or an opinion?

I tend to agree that the report should be divided into the various subjects we examined, but I think we should leave it to the analysts to come up with the first draft. Conclusions shouldn't factor into our drafting instructions.

According to my colleague, all the witnesses agreed that a safety management system was great, but I have some reservations about that. I don't want to get into a debate about it now; I imagine that will happen when we discuss the report. I think we need to exercise some restraint when we instruct the analysts.

[English]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: On a point of order, Madam Chair, we should be in camera right now.

The Chair: Okay, just a second.

Are you finished, Mr. Aubin?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: No.

[English]

The Chair: He has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I was just going to say that that is an aspect of our procedure here, in this committee, I can't quite get a handle on, but I really want to understand. To my mind, when we give the analysts drafting instructions, we shouldn't tell them to go in a certain direction. Instead, we should tell them what form we want the report to take and which subjects we want it to cover, in light of all the input we gathered.

It seems to me that to instruct the analysts on our findings even before the report has been drafted is to walk a rather fine line, at the very least. What makes our analysts so valuable is precisely the fact that they are completely non-partisan. They cannot have any political affiliation whatsoever. They must be able to be as objective as possible in looking at all of the comments of the witnesses, who appear before the committee to voice their support or opposition and sometimes qualify their positions. It is the analysts' job to produce as accurate a report as possible of what they took away from the committee's discussions.

It is the committee's job to bring out the various arguments. I think, then, that the least we can do is exercise some restraint in our drafting instructions to the analysts.

I'd like to know what you consider acceptable, Madam Chair, in terms of the committee's recommendations to the analysts on the drafting of the report. I expected that we would just provide instructions on the form of the report, not on its substance. I thought we would debate the substance once we received the draft report.

Since we seem to be all over the place, I'm going to go ahead and switch gears, because we don't have any real direction here. I would very much like to bring the discussion back to my suggestion that we ask the government to split the mammoth bill that is Bill C-49, so we can focus our efforts on the measures affecting farmers.

Once again, Madam Chair, I would point out that we have two or three issues on the table at the same time. This is all very confusing.

A voice: You have to keep talking; otherwise, we are moving in camera.

• (1250)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Aubin has been so quiet today that I just feel I have to give him his extra time, but I think Mr. Iacono wants the floor to clarify where he was going.

Mr. Aubin, please, it's your time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I'm being presumptuous, here, but I think that, rather than clarify where he is going, Mr. Iacono really wants to suggest that we move in camera. We were actually supposed to meet in camera, but my Liberal colleagues were the ones who suggested that we meet in public. For the sake of consistency, then, let's continue the meeting in public.

What we are in the midst of discussing isn't a crime of lese majesty, and we aren't going to get all worked up in public in an effort to bring some clarity to our work. I would remind you that I would like an answer to my question.

Considering that all our discussions since the meeting began have been in public, the people following our proceedings might be puzzled—to put it politely—as to why the committee would suddenly move in camera at the precise moment when our questions were finally going to be answered. It would be as though the television channel were suddenly cut. We've all experienced how frustrating it is to be watching a playoff game when the score is tied and suddenly the cable goes out during the third period. That's exactly what this would be like. I can't see how we could justify the decision to move in camera when the entire meeting thus far has taken place in public.

It's not that embarrassing of a discussion. The bills are public, and the questions we are asking are quite clear. They have to do with procedure. There is another equally, if not more, important question we need to answer, because it affects the day-to-day work of farmers all over the country, who are stuck in, what I would call, a no man's land; that question stems from the fact that Bill C-49 is a massive bill that came to us late.

We agree that one of the Minister of Transport's characteristics seems to be his studious nature and his lengthy examination of bills before bringing them forward. That approach probably has some merit. However, once the bill is introduced, he has to allow enough time for the work to be done properly given the issues in question.

Bill C-49 is so massive that the best thing would be to split it. I realize that our committee doesn't have the authority to divide a bill, but we can, at the very least, make a recommendation. I would think that the Minister of Transport would pay more attention to a unanimous recommendation than a majority one. We would then be in a position to act in the best interests of everyone involved, procedurally speaking.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Iacono.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank my colleague for his comments. I just want to signal that drafting instructions have always been done in camera—

The Chair: Then before you started, if you were referring to specific drafting instructions, we should have gone in camera.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Yes, but I have no objection to just saying a few more words.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Angelo Iacono: In no way was I trying to say—

The Chair: Would you like to clarify that?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Just to clarify, in no way was I trying to give any recommendations to the analysts.

I did say that we heard from a variety of witnesses. I did say that we also heard a great deal of comments on certain topics. On many occasions, I did say that it was based on what we were told.

Not once did I attempt to give recommendations or a sense of direction that the analysts should be following.

•(1255)

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Badawey has the floor.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I too want to thank Mr. Aubin. I think he started the process, with his original comments, of actually giving drafting advice to the analysts. I somewhat agree that, of course, when we do go into that discussion—first off, here I agree with Mr. Iacono—it should be done in closed session.

I think Mr. Aubin was starting to go down that road and to actually give the analysts some direction and advice with respect to doing their work, and coming back with some of those recommendations based on what we heard from the testimony of our witnesses. To some extent, I would agree.

Madam Chair, if we are going to go into the particulars of the drafting advice for the analysts, may I suggest a motion that it would be appropriate to go into a closed session?

The Chair: Given the fact that we have five minutes and have scheduled the second hour of Thursday's meeting very specifically for drafting instructions to the analysts, at this point—

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Chair, if I may, we do have five minutes. Five minutes is five minutes. We had a lot of what I would say was “unproductive” time today. If I can try to salvage even those last five minutes, I would move that we go into a closed session so we can at least start discussing drafting advice to the analysts.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Okay.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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