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Special Committee on Electoral Reform

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Tuesday, June 21, 2016

—

Chair

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia

Special Committee on Electoral Reform

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• (1305)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Danielle Widmer): Good afternoon, honourable members of the committee. I see a quorum.

I must inform members that the clerks of the committee can receive motions only for the election of the chair. The clerks cannot receive other types of motions, cannot entertain points of order, and cannot participate in debate.

[Translation]

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

Pursuant to the motion adopted by the House on Tuesday, June 7, 2016, the chair must be a member of the government party and must be elected by secret ballot.

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

[English]

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): I'd like to move that Francis Scarpaleggia be chair for this committee, please.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. Sahota that Francis Scarpaleggia be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Pursuant to the motion adopted by the House on Tuesday, June 7, 2016, each candidate is invited to address the committee for a maximum of three minutes.

I now invite Mr. Scarpaleggia to take the floor for a maximum of three minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): I would like to thank the clerk.

I would like to thank Ms. Sahota for nominating me as chair.

For those who don't know me yet, I want to make it clear that I'm not a very partisan person. When chairing a committee, all members, regardless of their level of partisanship, their party, or their biases, feel a strong sense of responsibility toward their colleagues. The chair wants them to see that the committee's affairs are being run properly.

My priority is to be the best chair possible. I want the committee to achieve a sense of balance by encouraging members to be polite and respectful toward each other. The Canadians following the

committee's work will want to see on the news that their country is generally well run and that respect is the norm in politics.

They will also want to see a certain level of bilingualism. I will therefore try my best to ensure a balance between the official languages. I think it's very important if we want to maintain the respect of Canadians and if we want our work to reflect who they are.

• (1310)

[English]

Canada is a nation of peace, order, and good government. I think the objective is for that spirit to infuse the work of the committee. I will do my best to chair in the manner of Mr. Reid when he chaired the subcommittee on human rights. I will try to be rigorous but also very respectful.

At the end of the day, whatever the outcome of the report, I think that all of us, as MPs, want to feel proud of the process and proud of the product.

[Translation]

I have no biases or firm opinion regarding the type of electoral system we should have in Canada. I am here to listen and not to influence people.

[English]

Last but not least, I think my biggest qualification to be chair is that I haven't made any summer vacation plans. Thank you.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Clerk: Pursuant to the motion adopted on Tuesday, June 7, 2016, the chair must be elected by secret ballot. Before proceeding, I must very briefly explain the process.

My colleague, who is a procedural clerk at the House of Commons, will distribute a ballot to each member of the committee.

You have to clearly indicate your choice by printing the first and last names of the candidate in block letters on the ballot and depositing it in the box. We will then count the votes and announce the name of the successful candidate. If a candidate does not receive a majority of the votes, another ballot will have to be conducted in the same manner.

•(1315) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1315)

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: I declare Mr. Scarpaleggia to have received a majority of the votes and is duly elected chair of the committee.

[*English*]

I invite Mr. Scarpaleggia to take the chair.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I want to thank my colleagues for their support.

We can now proceed with the election of the two vice-chairs of the committee. Ms. Widmer can proceed with the election.

Are there any motions?

Mr. Deltell, go ahead.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Chair, I move that Scott Reid be elected vice-chair.

The Chair: It has been moved that Scott Reid be elected vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

[*English*]

The Clerk: Pursuant to the motion adopted by the House on Tuesday, June 7, 2016, each candidate is invited to address the committee for a maximum of three minutes.

I now invite Mr. Scott Reid to take the floor for a maximum of three minutes.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Very quickly, colleagues, this gives me a chance to discuss my own background with the electoral reform issue.

Going back some 20 years, I served on the Reform Party's task force on electoral reform back in the late 1990s as staff help. I've written a number of papers on the subject. Back in 2004, I was a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs when it reviewed the issue of electoral reform. I think I am the last surviving member of that particular set of hearings. Hopefully I'll bring some experience but not too much presupposition as to where we're trying to go.

With that, I'll conclude, except to say thank you to our chair.

[*Translation*]

Thank you to our chair, Mr. Scarpaleggia, for his very kind words about my experience as chair of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. The position was held before me by my colleague, Mr. Kenney. With the help of members from all the parties, he determined the principles of consensus that guided the subcommittee and that I hope will guide this committee.

Thank you.

The Clerk: Pursuant to the motion adopted by the House on Tuesday, June 7, 2016, the first vice-chair must be elected by secret ballot.

[*English*]

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Chair, insofar as there's been an acclamation, I would like to move that we dispense with the secret ballot.

The Chair: It looks as though there is consensus around that.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Congratulations, Mr. Reid.

[*Translation*]

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: Pursuant to the motion adopted by the House on Tuesday, June 7, 2016, the second vice-chair must be a member from the New Democratic Party and must be elected by secret ballot.

I am ready to receive motions for the position of second vice-chair.

•(1320)

The Chair: I think Mr. Boulerice would like to nominate someone.

Go ahead.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to nominate my colleague and friend, Nathan Cullen.

The Clerk: Are there any further motions?

[*English*]

Pursuant to the motion adopted by the House on Tuesday, June 7, 2016, each candidate is invited to address the committee for a maximum of three minutes.

I now invite Mr. Cullen to take the floor for a maximum of three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Boulerice, for nominating me.

I want to thank our new chair and commend him for his work and experience.

I also want to congratulate Mr. Reid and commend him for his experience.

[*English*]

I will also attempt to be very brief, as brief as politicians are able to be in our role.

I very much look forward to this conversation with my colleagues. I can easily determine by the quality of the people around this table that each of our respective parties takes this issue of democratic reform extremely seriously. I look forward to working with colleagues I've long known and some colleagues I'm just getting to know.

Similar to Mr. Reid's case, my party, though not I, certainly has a long history on this issue. We were going back through some editions of *Hansard*, and for even longer than 40 years, people like Ed Broadbent and other New Democrats have been talking about electoral reform. We feel that sense of history and shared responsibility, and I also see it reflected in the nature and composition of this committee, the likes of which I don't believe Parliament has ever seen before.

We appreciate that this is the form selected by the government for this important and historic conversation. Not only in the form but also in the outcome and in the process that we choose, we hope to always be thinking of Canadians first and thinking of what is best for their democracy, for our democracy. We hope that this committee will instruct us to do that. No one party, no one political aspirant, can have it one way. It is going to require our best to work together to come out with the best outcome.

With that, Mr. Chair, I look forward to working with you, and to the conversations today and to those to come.

The Chair: Likewise.

The Clerk: Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare Mr. Cullen duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Before proceeding with the adoption of certain routine motions, I want to know whether you agree with the meeting being televised.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: In that case, we need to suspend the meeting for three minutes.

● (1320) _____ (Pause) _____

● (1325)

The Chair: I want to let my colleagues know that the meeting is now being televised and we can continue.

Mr. Deltell, go ahead.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We don't want to make things personal, but we are surprised to see Mr. Holland participating in this meeting. I will explain why.

Mr. Holland is parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions. However, the Prime Minister said that

parliamentary committee meetings would be run and attended only by members of Parliament who are neither parliamentary secretaries nor executive council members. That's why I'm asking the question.

The Chair: You're right. However, Mr. Holland does not have the right to vote as part of our work and will not get involved in the proceedings. I don't know whether the committee objects to him being seated at the table to follow our discussion.

Does everyone agree that Mr. Holland can sit at the table during committee meetings?

Mr. Kenney, go ahead.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chair, I don't think a specific person is the issue here, but parliamentary secretaries overall. I think Mr. Deltell wanted to point out that a commitment has been made. I think, in general, all rules must be followed, without targeting any person in particular.

The Chair: Okay. Does anyone else want to share their opinion?

Mr. Cullen, go ahead.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I only want to say that we have the same situation at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development with Mr. Aldag. The parliamentary secretary attends the meetings, but can't vote or make comments.

[*English*]

I understand Mr. Deltell's potential concern, which Mr. Kenney has reiterated. There's nothing personal, but I have seen this arrangement work fine on the environment committee, where the parliamentary secretary is there simply as an observer. It's the right of any MP, I believe, to come to the committee. As I'm sure Mr. Holland or Mr. DeCoursey will confirm, there is no voting and all of that good stuff, but he gets to watch our deliberations, which I think is fine for him to be able to do.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. DeCoursey.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): I wanted to make the same point as Mr. Cullen.

The Chair: Ms. Romanado, I assume you wanted to address the same issue.

I see that everyone agrees. Thank you.

Mr. Holland, welcome to the meeting.

We will now continue with the adoption of certain routine motions. I will start with the first motion.

Ms. Sahota, go ahead.

● (1330)

[*English*]

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I'd like to move:

That the Committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the Chair, the services of two analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist it in its work.

The Chair: We can go to debate. Does anyone want to speak on this motion?

Go ahead, Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: I'm not speaking against or for it; I'm just trying to confirm that this is different from the routine draft that was passed out. Is that correct?

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Yes, that is correct. I noticed from the House orders that two have been assigned to this committee. Because of that fact, I figured that it would be more accurate to state it in this way, so that at the very least we would have two, and, if needed from time to time, perhaps more.

Mr. Scott Reid: Would you be able to repeat the wording? I have a sense that the clerk may not have heard it. Have you already given a text to the clerk?

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I can repeat it, absolutely:

That the Committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the Chair, the services of two analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist it in its work.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there agreement with this motion? Are there any objections? I don't see any.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I deem the motion adopted, and I would invite our two analysts to join us.

Welcome. Congratulations.

[*Translation*]

The second motion concerns the possible creation of a subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

Would anyone like to put forward a motion?

Mr. Cullen, go ahead.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

I have a suggestion. When I look at it, this is a pro forma version of how the subcommittee.... I've seen subcommittees work well, and for a committee potentially as complicated and as unique as this one, I think a subcommittee would serve us well.

I'd like the committee members to consider the inclusion on the subcommittee of a member from the Bloc and of Madam May as well, to allow for input. The subcommittee typically takes care of things like scheduling and vetting witness lists. I think it would be unfortunate if the subcommittee made a decision on either of those types of topics and then had to return to the main committee and try to pass a motion that in fact did not work for our colleagues.

I can move the specific motion, Mr. Chair, but—

The Chair: Do you have it written down?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I do have the actual terminology, but I don't have enough copies for the members. The one explicit change is to add two members, one being from the Bloc Québécois and one being Madam May.

The Chair: Okay. Then it would read:

That a Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of the Chair, the two Vice-Chairs, two members of the government named by the

Whip and a Member from the Bloc québécois and from the Green Party; that the Chair of the Committee be the Chair of the Subcommittee.

Is that correct?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That is the addition that I would look to make.

The Chair: Are there any comments or questions?

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): I'd like to thank Nathan very much for that proposal, because I was going to ask if I could please play a role on the subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

[*Translation*]

The same is true for my colleague from the Bloc Québécois.

Thank you.

The Chair: Once again, everyone seems to agree.

[*English*]

Go ahead, Mr. DeCoursey.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: I am certainly open to adding Bloc Québécois and Green Party members. As Liberal Party members, we agree with having only one Liberal member on the subcommittee, along with the chair. The committee would thus have five members, one from each party, and the chair.

The Chair: I understand. There would be two government party members, the chair and another member.

Do you agree? Apart from the chair, there would be one other Liberal Party member.

(Amendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

Are there any further motions?

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Chair, how many members does that give the subcommittee now?

• (1335)

The Chair: I think it's about six, if I'm not mistaken. I count five plus the chair.

Mr. Scott Reid: You're saying it's five plus the chair.

The Chair: What's your point?

Mr. Scott Reid: Well, it raises the potential for ties in voting to be broken by the chair. That may not be an essential consideration if we're assuming that all discussions get reported back to the—

The Chair: Yes, the committee, as you know probably better than I, is the master of its own decisions.

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

The Chair: That motion is carried. Are there any other proposals for motions?

Go ahead, Ms. Romanado.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Regarding meetings held without a quorum, I put forward the following:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence in the absence of a quorum, provided that at least four members are present, including one member from the government party and one member from the opposition.

The Chair: Are there any comments?

Mr. Reid, go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Reid: Forgive me if I'm incorrect, but if it's pursuant to the motion adopted on June 7, do we even have discretion not to accept this in its present form? Is it automatically required that we follow this?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: The House passed this motion—

The Chair: Then we don't have to...okay.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Unless it's directed from the House, the motion—

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Scott Reid: I just want to confirm that it's correct.

The Chair: It is.

Mr. Scott Reid: It is correct? Okay.

The Chair: Is there anyone else?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): I'll move, related to the distribution of documents, the following:

That only the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the Committee and only when such documents exist in both official languages and that witnesses be advised accordingly prior to appearing before the Committee.

That's as stated in the document that was handed out.

The Chair: Is there any controversy around this? No?

Go ahead, Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: I have one comment, Mr. Chair.

This is something that has created problems in the past with regard to notice periods. If we are unreasonably peremptory in our expectation that a witness appear before the committee, and the witness, particularly in this kind of case, is perhaps an expert witness with a substantial report to make, we're effectively depriving ourselves of the benefit of the written supplementation to that individual's testimony if we don't give an adequate notice period or we don't have special translation available for what could potentially be a document that's lengthier than the ones we normally receive. I think we'll face this problem more here than with a normal committee.

This is not meant to change the wording of the motion. It is meant to put us on our guard. We have to be sensitive to the fact that we

may be depriving ourselves of information if we are not sensitive to the timing issues that will arise.

The Chair: That's a good point, Mr. Reid.

I'm told, and I've seen it from experience, that the witnesses would still be able to come, but their documents would not be distributed until they were in both official languages. They hopefully would be very soon distributed in both official languages so that the committee would still have the benefit of the verbal testimony and the written testimony in both languages.

Mr. Scott Reid: Yes. I myself, Mr. Chair, before I became a member of Parliament, was a witness before the procedure and House affairs committee. I can tell you that at the time, I did not learn of the need to get documents submitted for translation until after it happened. These problems arise from time to time.

The Chair: Yes, they do.

Mr. Scott Reid: It's just good for us to be on our guard.

The Chair: That's a good point.

Mr. Cullen is next.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Very briefly, I think the motion has to be maintained, simply because if we were to distribute in one language, it would put certain committee members at a disadvantage if others were able to refer to it in their maternal language while others simply couldn't make their way through it.

My experience has been very similar to the chair's in that the witness is always able to present. I take Mr. Reid's advice that we give them as much warning as possible. Some witnesses just don't heed the advice. When they come in, their documents aren't ready on time or they show up the same morning. It happens. We can get them translated afterwards, but I think all committee members, regardless of language, should be on the same footing as we hear testimony at the time.

I'm sure the clerks will give lots of notice to our witnesses, but I've seen too many times in the past that witnesses simply don't abide by our advice. I'm not suggesting that was the case with you, Scott. I'm sure that's not what happened. I just think we have to be able to hear the witnesses on an equal basis and then move on and get the documents later, as they're translated.

• (1340)

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. May.

Ms. Elizabeth May: I think particularly in the case of this committee, I support the idea that we ensure that all material for this committee be available in both official languages.

However, we are likely to hear from witnesses whose official language is neither English nor French. We're likely to hear from German parliamentarians and we're likely to seek advice from parliamentarians who are Swedish or Danish.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Scottish.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Nathan suggests Scottish, but we can have translators available.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Elizabeth May: The main thing is that as we accept evidence, the committee have the capacity to translate key information so that it's available in English and French if the witnesses don't have the wherewithal themselves to do so.

The Chair: I'm told we have interpreters for languages other than French and English. That's a good point, because we're indeed studying electoral systems from all over the world.

I assume this motion meets with everyone's approval.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Does anyone have a motion on working meals?

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I move:

That the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the Committee and its subcommittees.

Hopefully there's no disagreement.

The Chair: There doesn't seem to be. I'll go out on a limb here and suggest that there is consensus around this motion.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Can this be the first committee to look for local food that is sustainable and ethical? I don't think that's likely, but I thought I'd make a bid.

The Chair: Well, it's out there, and I'm sure the House of Commons administration will take that into account.

Can we move on to witnesses' expenses?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Concerning witnesses' expenses, I move:

That, if requested, reasonable travel and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses not exceeding two representatives per organization; and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Does anyone have a motion on staff at in camera meetings?

Go ahead, Ms. Romanado.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move the following:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each Committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person at an *in camera* meeting and that each party represented on the Committee also be permitted to have one staff person from its Whip's or House Leader's office present.

The Chair: Are there any comments?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Aldag, go ahead.

[English]

Mr. John Aldag: Moving to in camera meeting transcripts, I move:

That the transcript of each *in camera* meeting be kept by the Clerk of the Committee for consultation by members of the Committee in the Clerk's office.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: That's pretty standard.

Go ahead, Ms. Sahota, on notice of motions.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: In reference to notice of motions, I move:

That 48 hours' notice be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the Committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration; and that the notice of motion be filed with the Clerk of the Committee by 4 p.m. from Monday to Thursday and before 2:00 p.m. on Friday and distributed to members in both official languages; and that when the Committee is travelling on official business, no substantive motions be moved.

I've included a little bit of an addition to this motion.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Are there any comments? Everyone is fine with the addition as well, about motions during travel times? Mr. Cullen, are you in agreement? I see you are.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now we go to a motion on time allocation.

We will go to Mr. Cullen or Ms. May.

Ms. Elizabeth May: I defer to Mr. Cullen. I think we're speaking to the same point now.

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: There are two issues I'd like to raise. Ms. May will cover one with regard to the allocation of time and how we find a balance between witnesses and the amount of time MPs get to ask questions.

I have a motion that is not just about the timing, Chair. It is an innovation that the committee might consider today.

We've been talking a great deal about how to make what we do here as open and accessible as possible to the public. One of the ideas brought forward by someone online was to allow some access to the public for that same engagement that we have as MPs and to do that with technology. It's possible. I have some language for this, Chair. I'll read it out first, and then perhaps we can distribute it for the committee's consideration:

That the committee allot the equivalent of one MP speaking spot per meeting to hear questions directly from Canadians at each meeting with witnesses; that the committee receive questions from Canadians via the committee's email address and the Twitter hashtag #yourvotecda; and that questions be reviewed and selected by the clerk of the committee and posed to the witnesses by the chair.

Just to explain what I'm proposing, prior to a meeting we have witnesses testify for a certain amount of time. Canadians who are tuning in to this conversation about how we are adapting and evolving our democracy will be able to email directly through the clerk's office. We have the technology, obviously, to be able to see what Canadians are asking. We would take one of the slots normally allocated for a member of Parliament to ask questions. The clerk, we trust, is a non-partisan actor in this place who is able to vet and offer up three or perhaps four questions, which you, Chair, would then read to the witnesses to allow Canadians direct access to those experts and to be able to engage people in a much more forthright way than simply doing that always through their member of Parliament or the members who happen to be sitting at this committee.

I have the exact text of this motion if you'd like me to distribute it, or however you'd like to proceed.

• (1345)

The Chair: Is it in both official languages?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: It is in both official languages.

The Chair: Okay, then we'll distribute it.

Next is Ms. May, then Mr. DeCoursey.

Ms. Elizabeth May: I want to speak in favour of this motion. My motion is very similar. I like Nathan's suggestion that it be by Twitter hashtag. My motion suggests a couple of differences from the main one.

[*Translation*]

Unfortunately, I have only the English text right now.

[*English*]

My language was followed by five minutes of allocated questions from the public, whether participating online or as otherwise decided by the committee.

The challenge for this committee, in our efforts to engage Canadians, is the more we do things a bit differently, the greater the likelihood that the committee's proceedings will be followed not just by people who want to input their suggestions but by people who are curious about the process and want to learn with us as we MPs learn about the various options.

This approach would allow Canadians to watch online. It hasn't come up in official business of the committee, but I've certainly been approached by CPAC. They want to broadcast this committee online live, as they do all parliamentary proceedings. This is the first-ever opportunity since 1867 for members of the public who are actually so engaged that they want to watch this process televised to be able to say, "Gee, I wish they'd asked this question, because I didn't understand that bit."

If they could send their questions to us right away and the clerks could process them and hand them to Mr. Chair to ask the questions, it would enhance our work enormously and increase the likelihood that the committee would reach not just the people who are in the room with us but tens of thousands more Canadians.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. May.

Go ahead, Mr. DeCoursey.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: I want to thank Mr. Cullen and Ms. May for the sentiment of ensuring that this is open and available and accessible to Canadians.

My understanding is the committee will undertake a comprehensive consultation tour of the country, and all 338 members are encouraged to conduct consultations in their ridings.

I would open it up for questioning around the concern that perhaps the same person would be sending in questions time and time again. I would also propose that maybe this suggestion could be dealt with at the subcommittee, which can look at individual meetings and say whether there is an opportunity through technology and different communication tools to undertake such an avenue. Otherwise, I'd like to think that we need to get to work talking to academics,

learning about the deep details of this issue, and making sure that we are ready to open it up to Canadians when the time comes to tour the country.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I appreciate Matt's comment. We've worked out some of the timing with regard to how the committee would do the questioning so that it wouldn't take any time away from the MPs. For anyone concerned about losing a slot—I know that's sometimes a concern on the government bench—as a result of our proposal, in terms of timing, that wouldn't happen. We would have rounds, whether in a two-hour one-panel meeting or in a three-hour meeting with two panels, since sometimes committees take that form. We've done the math and made sure that everybody at the committee would also be heard.

I take Matt's point that there are consultations being undertaken by MPs in various stages. I suppose what's unique about this is the access to the quality of witnesses we're going to have, the privilege we have as members of Parliament to draw not just from across Canada but also from around the world.

One of the things we've struggled with on this particular issue is being able to broaden it and to have a greater number of Canadians understand the importance of what we're doing here, Mr. Chair. With the advent of social media technologies, as uncomfortable as being engaged this way around testimony might make some of our clerks, I don't actually have a concern about, as Matt raised, one person asking again and again. I don't think that would be hard to eliminate, simply because we would vary who gets to pose the questions that day, and the clerk would be in charge of that.

I just imagine us going around, each asking our questions. The witnesses will answer our questions, but Canadians have insights on this question that are completely different from those that we as members of Parliament have. They are asking from a completely different perspective, and the questions we would get from the public in that way would open up new veins of information and testimony that we have not considered before. It's innovative, I understand, and it might be a bit unusual.... It is unusual: we've never done something like this, but we've never had a committee like this. In the 149 years of our Parliament, we've never had a committee that looks like this, discussing the foundation of our Parliament.

I hear the suggestion about taking it to the subcommittee. I'd like us to really embrace this today as an opportunity, and to try it out. Let's put it this way: the first round here is with expert witnesses, Mr. Chair. That's what the committee has considered. Let's try it out. Let's give it a few meetings and see if there's uptake from the public. If the public is engaged and we're seeing a lot of action on Twitter and a lot of emails coming in, then we'll know it's working. I have no doubt in my mind that the quality and the breadth of the questions will be excellent, and I also think they'll be innovative. I think the public will be asking things that we didn't even consider.

• (1350)

The Chair: Thank you.

Next are Mr. Kenney, Ms. May, and Monsieur Deltell.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chair, my primary concern about this motion is that it proposes a fundamental change in the role and nature of a parliamentary committee, thereby creating a precedent before we've even considered or studied the implications of such a precedent.

I can think of a long list of shortcomings in this proposal. There is no effective way of screening a barrage of repetitive questions from a small number of individuals using different accounts, for example, and, moreover, this is a parliamentary committee. We are elected by our constituents to do our job as legislators, to deliberate with all of the resources at our disposal, both parliamentary researchers and the Library of Parliament, and our own party research resources, and to bring to bear our own professional life experience to these issues. We are not here to be conduits for Twitter or other platforms of social media, which are all very interesting and in which there's a robust and sometimes vulgar public debate.

If Mr. Cullen feels strongly about this proposal, then I would suggest he could very simply put questions that are emailed to him or his office or proposed to him on social media platforms. There's nothing preventing members from doing that. That, in fact, would not be unprecedented. I recall that the former leader of the third party in the 1993 Parliament, Mr. Manning, frequently posed questions in question period that had been submitted to his office by members of the general public via something prehistoric called the fax machine. Members of the public were encouraged to submit questions for question period by fax machine, and Mr. Manning and members of his party periodically chose to read those questions in question period as opposed to asking their own.

There is nothing barring any member of the committee from doing that, but I think to set aside time from members, who are elected to do this job as deliberative legislators, would be a fairly radical change in the character of a parliamentary committee. I'm not opposed to innovation or to considering it, but it seems to me the right place to do so would be at the procedure and House affairs committee or at some other body that has the luxury of considering procedural questions closely, rather than imposing such an innovation on this committee, which should be doing its job deliberatively.

• (1355)

The Chair: I have Ms. May, Mr. Deltell, Ms. Sahota, and Mr. Cullen again.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't want to repeat the points I already made.

[*English*]

It's interesting that it's not the first time we've had a committee like this. I shared this with Mr. Reid. I found, or a very clever member of my staff found, the 1937 proceedings of the special committee on electoral reform. It examined proportional representation, whether we should change our voting system, and whether we should include members who were in parties of fewer than 12 MPs.

One thing they didn't have in 1937 was access to immediate questions from people across the country who could be watching the witnesses and sending in their questions. I take Jason's point entirely, but I don't think this is radical. It's still a parliamentary committee. It's still those of us around the table who hear the questions posed and hear the witnesses answer and are able to take that into consideration as we form our report, so I don't think it's in any way a radical deviation from parliamentary procedure.

I want to mention one demographic that would pay a lot of attention, and that's Canada's youth. If we create a way to get young people interested in something that a lot of people over this summer are going to think is pretty dry stuff, a special committee on electoral reform, imagine if they actually start tuning in and sending us questions. I think it's an innovation that will help the legitimacy of this process.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Deltell, go ahead.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, Mr. Cullen said earlier that, technically, this is the first time a parliamentary committee will be looking at this issue, and he was right about that. However, this is not the first time a parliamentary committee will be establishing different rules or a different membership system.

Mr. Aldag will remember that we had the privilege of serving on the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying, which was made up of members of both the House of Commons and Senate. The committee had two chairs, and the proceedings were non-partisan. There are thus new ways of doing things.

When a particularly sensitive issue was being discussed in the committee, I had my iPhone in front of me and I received comments directly, a bit like Mr. Kenney mentioned earlier. While I won't spill any secrets, former colleagues from the National Assembly were sharing their observations, even questions, with me. It helped a great deal with accomplishing the work, which led to the main report and dissenting report.

In its current form, the motion refers to allotting one MP speaking spot. Which member are we talking about? A government party member can have up to seven minutes, according to the first motion put forward. Let's take things further. Are we talking about three minutes, based on the time given to the NDP? Or are we instead talking about a period of up to 24 minutes for the government party member? The issue must be clarified.

Mr. Kenney raised very relevant issues about identifying people on Twitter and Facebook. We have all been victims of people who are not exactly friends and who send us nonsense on Twitter. Will we check who we're dealing with and whether they're real people, or whether it's a group trying to steer the debate in some way? Do we want to give them the chance to speak?

Clearly, Mr. Cullen has a worthy goal. He wants to give the floor to the people watching CPAC at home who have the good idea of asking a question. However, in practice, that could present major challenges.

The same is true for the final choice. We have complete confidence in the work of the analysts and clerks, and we have great respect for what they do. While my experience here is limited, I have been very impressed with the quality and professionalism of those people, particularly the ones who provide all the relevant documentation. I can tell you that, in another legislature, I didn't have this, and I greatly appreciate it.

The point I want to make is that the issue raises many questions. It wouldn't hurt for the steering committee to look at it to help weigh the pros and cons. It may be worthwhile, but it's not urgent. It's worth some consideration, which could lead to the establishment of certain precautionary measures to ensure that things run smoothly and that Mr. Cullen's goal is achieved. The goal is obviously completely relevant. It's possible for Canadians to get directly involved in the debate. We pay attention to our emails and to the other communications we receive, but this would warrant consideration, in my view, by the steering committee.

● (1400)

The Chair: So, Mr. Deltell, you want to amend the motion and have it studied by the steering committee.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Other people wanted to share their view. We could talk about it later, because I don't want to monopolize the time.

The Chair: Ms. Sahota, go ahead.

[English]

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Thank you. It's a very interesting proposal, and I've been going through it back and forth in my mind while I'm sitting here. I think this is a special committee, so we are trying to do things differently after a very long time. It would be interesting to hear what Canadians think and have them provide input into our committee.

I don't know how the clerks would go about doing that and weeding people out. Concerns have been raised, and those are going to be some of the challenges. There are some political questions, and decisions would have to be made as well in some regard, but I'm confident that the clerks would perhaps be able to bring a balance of questions each time and also not pick repetitive questions. If that were done, then I think I could see it working out.

In my opinion, it's innovative and interesting, but if it doesn't happen, I'm also confident that each of us here at this table should also be going to these sources, such as Twitter, and listening to the questions that Canadians are asking and, through us, they would be able to ask the witnesses those questions as well. There are many approaches we can take, and we are all going to be required to do town hall meetings on the matter as well.

It's interesting, and I'm definitely considering this option.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cullen is next.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I know there were some concerns raised about how this process would function. We wanted to keep it very simple, so imagine a two-hour meeting at which we would have perhaps five witnesses who could testify for seven minutes, and then we could use 11 MP slots of seven minutes each for questioning. The

very last slot, a 12th slot, would be for a series of questions from the public.

By the way, for those less familiar with the committee, we rely on the clerks all the time to provide non-partisan information and to weed out, as Jason and others have concerned themselves with, anything repetitive or hyperpartisan in nature. They do it all the time, and do an incredible job, and have for many years.

In terms of it being radical, if one looks at the etymology, to go to the roots of the issue, we as legislators ask Canadians to embrace change all the time. We propose new laws. In elections we consistently ask Canadians to vote one way, vote another way, or think about issues in a different way, so far be it from us not to consider doing things differently as well. I would say that PROC would be welcome to come and study us and see how this example goes to see if it would work at the defence and transport committees.

In terms of the cost and benefit, if we were to try it for five or 10 meetings and the questions were difficult to vet or there weren't any questions coming from Canadians, which I would find hard to believe, or if, for whatever reasons, committee members didn't feel that it was working to our benefit or to the benefit of the study, then we would abandon the exercise. However, in terms of the benefit, it could potentially open up a new avenue for us with questions we weren't contemplating.

The setting of the example at this committee is fine. As Mr. Kenney said—and we are all open to this—I'll commit to posing at least one question that has come in through social media every day to @nathancullen. I think we should be welcoming those, not just in our personal work as committee members but also in how this committee goes about this issue, because this is not ours; this entire conversation belongs to Canadians. Why wouldn't we take an opportunity, a low-risk opportunity, to open the door a little bit further to Canadians who wish to participate?

As Elizabeth said, electoral reform on July 21 might not light up the airwaves of CBC—although maybe it would on CPAC—but we want to be able to engage people through all means possible, particularly if there's very little downside, and on this I see very little downside. Certainly I take my role as a legislator very seriously, and I know my responsibilities in terms of voting on, considering, and passing legislation.

● (1405)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. DeCourcey is next.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey: I want to thank everyone for their interventions. Certainly, if I'm listening correctly, there's a willingness to make sure that Canadians are heard right throughout this process, and I want to ensure the same. I wonder how to do this.

We had circulated a potential speaking rotation for consideration. I wonder if we can consider these two pieces together. Could we look at the speaking rotation and the opportunity for public input at the end of the session together?

It would take some stickhandling to ensure that meetings were set up properly so that witnesses had enough time to speak, that the principle of allowing every member of the committee to speak was met, and that we were also listening to Canadians. That might be a question for the subcommittee to put together as a whole, and I would ask the clerk for her input on how that would be put together. I don't know if I have to make an amendment to the motion on the table to try to present these together and to deliver that motion, but I'm willing to do that to ensure that we find a way to allow members the opportunity to ask questions and engage Canadians as well.

The Chair: Just a moment. I'm just trying to sort my way through this.

Mr. Reid, you have a point of order.

Mr. Scott Reid: Procedurally speaking, I'm not sure if it's a point of order. You can cut me off if I'm going in the wrong direction.

There's a separate motion dealing with time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses, which I think is what Mr. DeCoursey is talking about folding this into. While I appreciate what he's trying to do, I suggest that it would be outside the scope of this particular motion to expand it to cover that motion.

In a way, it's unfortunate we didn't deal with these in reverse. I would suggest we try to deal with this one and then turn to that motion, simply because it allows us to deal with a number of things that aren't contemplated in this motion, such as the overall length of time for the rounds with witnesses and that sort of thing.

The Chair: Do you agree, Mr. DeCoursey, to treat these two items separately?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Just for clarification, we would vote on the motion to open the opportunity for Canadians to ask questions, and then move to the specific time allocation for witnesses, questioning, and where, if this motion passes, the questioning would be put for Canadians.

The Chair: That last point about Canadians' participation is what Mr. Cullen's motion—

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: I guess I'm asking whether we can put those together and move them as part of one motion. I don't know if that could be seen by the other side, by the mover, as being a friendly amendment.

The Chair: I'm told it's a bit dicey; it's a bit difficult to do that kind of merger of these two somewhat unrelated motions.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Could we table this motion, move to the speaking order, and then see if we could move to opening it up to Canadians?

The Chair: As I understand it, there are a couple of things we can do, and our clerk will correct me if I'm wrong. We could essentially amend the motion to say that it should be sent to the steering committee for further discussion, or if Mr. Cullen had unanimous consent, he could withdraw it, but I don't think that's his objective.

I think those are the two options. We could, with an amendment and a vote, send it to the steering committee and let them hash it out there, if you will.

Is that correct?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thériault will speak first, followed by Mr. Reid, Ms. May, and Mr. Deltell.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll keep this quick.

From 2003 to 2007, when I was an MNA in Quebec, sometimes citizens would speak before a committee, and they could ask the witnesses questions. Occasionally, the angle of their questions would be completely different from the angle of the MNAs' questions.

I would be open to both options. I understand the Conservative Party's concerns. The work of elected officials in a committee such as this one shouldn't be diminished. We have been duly elected. In the public sphere, the impression is sometimes given that people are disaffected with democratic institutions, and that everything unrelated to Parliament is more legitimate.

I'll set that perspective aside. As long as we don't use public participation for partisan purposes, I support the motion. I also don't see any problem with the subcommittee looking into the issue, especially since we're talking about selecting the most relevant questions. Hopefully, the angle of the questions will be different from the angle of the questions asked by members.

That's what I wanted to say.

● (1410)

The Chair: So, you want to refer this motion to the steering committee. If that's the case, someone needs to propose an amendment to the motion for it to be referred to the steering committee.

Mr. Reid, I think you want to add something.

[*English*]

Mr. Cullen, do you have a point of order?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I'm not sure if it's a point of order, but let's try.

The sense I'm getting is that there's concern by some of my Conservative colleagues, there's some willingness or strong support from Madam May and perhaps from the Bloc, and there is some openness from the Liberals, if I recall the conversation to this point.

If putting this to the subcommittee would expedite the process of striking this committee and being able to talk about what happens over the next couple of weeks, then we can have a conversation. If I can get a confirmation from my colleagues that there's a willingness to consider this seriously and if the clerk's office can make sure there aren't any logistical issues, then we could simply follow it up later with a conversation and have a vote on it or something. My one concern is that we not simply let it slide off the table.

I'm seeing some commitment to that around the table, Chair. That could expedite our process today. I don't want this particular aspect to take up our whole time.

The Chair: Would you withdraw it, or...?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I would simply table it to the subcommittee, once the committee has its first confirmed meeting.

The Chair: I'm told we can do that, but someone else would have to move an amendment to the motion to do that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I suspected that.

The Chair: You're on the list, Mr. DeCoursey, but—

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: I'd like to move an amendment.

The Chair: No, I think we have to go to Mr. Reid, Ms. May, Mr. Deltell, and then you.

Go ahead, Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: I actually already raised the matter as a point of order. I should be struck off the list.

The Chair: Ms. May is next.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have prepared a motion that speaks to all the elements of time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses. It relates to how much time we'd give in the opening and in the rounds of questioning, with time allocation that includes all the members around this table.

I can present my motion now, or, if it's the will of the committee to follow Nathan Cullen's advice that this motion for opening remarks, questioning of witnesses, and the public participation potential around the table all go to the subcommittee, I won't take the time of the committee to read it out. However, I think we need more time for witnesses than an initial 10 minutes, which is the routine around this place.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Deltell, go ahead.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I want to reassure Mr. Cullen and everyone listening to us.

The reason I submitted that the motion be studied by the steering committee is that it's being taken very seriously. If we had found the motion frivolous, we wouldn't have given it much thought. We would have said "thank you and good night". It's a worthy move, but it has to be done correctly.

Remember that we're talking about institutions—the very essence of our committee—and nothing is more fragile in a democracy than its institutions. These discussions certainly shouldn't be rushed. The intention is good. As Mr. Kenney said, we already receive immediate feedback when we carry out our usual work. Can this apply to another matter? Let's take the time to examine the situation properly.

That's why we want the steering committee to look at the matter from a technical, logistical, and chronological point of view. How much time should be allotted? When should it be allotted? Will it be proportional to the time normally given to government party, Bloc Québécois, or Green Party members? Many things must be carefully reviewed, and a formal motion concerning the time granted for

certain aspects must be put forward. These aspects must be established.

That's why we think the work must be serious, thorough, and well-thought-out. It must be analyzed correctly to be meaningful. Once it has reached that stage, the steering committee can look at it and make recommendations that will eventually be accepted by everyone. However, rushing through these issues would be a disservice to the activity we've all been asked to carry out in the coming months.

•(1415)

The Chair: Do you propose an amendment for the motion to be referred to the steering committee?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: It could read as follows, and I will say it out loud without having written it beforehand.

That the steering committee study the possibility that the committee allot...

I'd like to let the clerks know that I'm not sure whether the wording is technically correct.

The Chair: I'm told that we could write that the issue will be referred to the steering committee for further study.

We will now vote on the amendment stating that the committee recommends the motion be studied by the steering committee. The clerk will take care of the exact wording, but that's the gist of the amendment.

We will vote on Mr. Deltell's motion.

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

The Chair: We can now move on to another motion.

[English]

Mr. Scott Reid: Is this on questioning of witnesses? Is that what we're moving to now, or is it something else?

The Chair: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Scott Reid: All right. Why don't we just take the one that was circulated to us?

The Chair: Would you like me to read it? It reads:

That witnesses be given ten (10) minutes to make their opening statement; and that during the questioning of witnesses the time allocated to each questioner be as follows:

for the first round of questioning, seven (7) minutes to a representative of each party in the following order: Liberal Party, Conservative Party, NDP and Liberal;

for the second round, five (5) minutes be allocated in the following order: Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Conservative Party, Liberal Party; followed by NDP, for three (3) minutes.

That's how it reads here. Is that what you're moving?

Mr. Scott Reid: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. DeCoursey.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: I'd like to propose an amendment, if a motion was so moved.

To ensure that we reflect the composition of the committee and ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak—and I'm hopeful as well that we will find the time through the subcommittee process to ensure that we find a way to engage Canadians in this process—I propose to amend the motion as follows:

That the motion be amended by changing the words after “That” with the following:

“witnesses have ten (10) minutes to present their opening statement;

followed by the first round of questions: six (6) minutes Liberal Party, six (6) minutes Conservative Party, six (6) minutes NDP, six (6) minutes Bloc québécois, six (6) minutes Green, six (6) minutes Liberal;

followed by a second round: five (5) minutes Conservative, five (5) minutes Liberal, five (5) minutes Conservative, five (5) minutes Liberal, five (5) minutes NDP, three (3) minutes Bloc québécois and three (3) minutes the Green Party.”

That was the sheet that we circulated prior to this meeting. Ms. May just got it now.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. May.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the amendments to reflect the obvious, which is that there are full members of this committee from the Green Party and the Bloc Québécois. As we are full members, there is no justification for three minutes for the Bloc and three minutes for the Green Party in the second round. Our allocation in terms of the amount of time should be equal, even if the number of time slots is not.

Perhaps this is the right time to go through my proposal. I've given a copy to the clerks. Unfortunately, and I apologize, it was drafted in English only.

My proposal was that witnesses be given 30 minutes for their opening statement. Then the questioning would be seven minutes for each, in the sequence of Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Bloc, Green, Liberal, followed by a second round of five minutes each for Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, NDP, Bloc, and Green, followed by five minutes for questions from the public.

That's my proposal. The 30-minute piece is for ensuring that we have adequate time to hear from experts, but perhaps the time at the beginning for witnesses could also be flagged. We could have that go to the subcommittee to consider whether that should be at the discretion of the chair.

I would like us to recognize that presentations of only 10 minutes from people who have spent their lifetime studying electoral reform will be inadequate for their expertise. While we're going across the country and hearing from as many people as possible, we may perhaps want to have 10-minute presentations, but when we solicit the opinions of experts, we should want more than 10 minutes. We should go to 30 minutes.

It is possible that we could go to shorter times for Bloc and Green, but I want to make sure that we recognize that we're not junior members on the committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1420)

The Chair: Would anyone like to...?

We will go to Mr. DeCoursey, and then Mr. Aldag and Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: I want to thank Ms. May for the intervention and I apologize that it hadn't got around in front of you as I spoke.

There is certainly no intention to treat any member disparagingly or preferentially over another. This is just to ensure that every member of the committee gets at least one chance to speak during each round of questioning.

I do think that 10 minutes can be enough for a quality witness. Then it behooves us all to ensure that we are ready with good questions. Certainly there is a little upwards of an hour of questioning on top of the witnesses' testimony, so I'm confident in this process. Certainly I'm not immovable on this point, but I am confident that this arrangement gives us adequate time to adequately question witnesses and hear their expertise.

Merci beaucoup.

The Chair: Mr. Aldag is next.

Mr. John Aldag: To build on what Matt has said, I'm concerned about the 30 minutes. We could fill our entire summer.

We're going to hear very important information from our witnesses. I wonder if we could keep their allotted time to 10 minutes to keep it tight, but invite written submissions. There could be a lot of information given to us that we could still pull into our final report.

I think we need to be aware of the amount of time we can give to each witness. I'd rather keep the presentation piece a bit tighter, have time allotted for us to do the questioning, and invite written submissions to round out the information we're hearing from the witnesses.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I was just clarifying the 30 minutes with Ms. May, because originally it was 30 minutes for all witnesses, but I think she's suggesting 30 minutes for each witness. I would agree with what John just said. If I look at a panel of five witnesses, we'd potentially be two and a half hours into the meeting before we would start to have the exchange. I'm someone who, over time, has enjoyed the exchange—not necessarily more than the opening statements sometimes, but it's an exchange, and you can probe into something that's been said.

Mr. Chair, since we've deferred one aspect of how the committee is going to function with witnesses and how we're going to allot time for questions and arrange the lineup, I suggest that we also send this matter to them. As was said earlier, the two are in fact connected. If we do end up including a public piece in our lineup—or if we don't—it will affect the timing allocation. We could go through this whole debate now and pass a motion to allot this many minutes here and this many minutes there, but if the subcommittee decides to do something different, we're back to the same conversation. Then we would have to adjust what we decided on.

Why not send both these questions to the subcommittee? That's a typical job for a steering committee. They'll come back to us, of course; it will always be put back to the main committee to decide to agree to or modify whatever the steering committee comes up with. It's better than spending all of our time here today doing that.

The Chair: Are you proposing an amendment?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes, a friendly one, a very friendly amendment.

This conversation is good. It's important that we arrive at a fair allocation of time and that we get to do our jobs properly, yet this thing that we just sent to the steering committee will inevitably be connected to this conversation. It's the same amendment that Mr. Deltell moved on my amendment to Madam May's...or this main motion that Scott started off.

• (1425)

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. May.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the latitude to speak to this a little more.

Just to step back, in the past—and I don't mean the dim recesses of time, such as 1937, but the times I remember—parliamentary committees did not force-march witnesses through the process as quickly as possible, and not every witness was put on a panel.

To make sure my memory wasn't false on this point, I tried to figure out who I could phone. I called a former member of Parliament, Karen Kraft Sloan, with whom I worked when she was on the environment committee long ago. I asked, "In the old days, didn't witnesses get half an hour or 20 minutes?" She said yes, that it was at least 20 minutes, depending on the witness.

I think latitude is needed. For instance, the person who's at the top of my proposed list of witnesses, which we haven't gotten to, is Professor Arend Lijphart, and those who've studied electoral reform for a long time.... I know Scott Reid would know this witness. This man has spent his life studying empirical evidence of the effect of voting systems on how governments and parliaments perform and whether there is a statistical alignment between how people vote and how well their country does economically. These are very interesting questions, but complex, with a lot of data from the 36 countries that were studied.

It would be a huge loss of our opportunity to learn if we held a witness like that to a 10-minute presentation. On the other hand, we could have a lot of witnesses who want to come to us when we do public hearings across the country. I take the point made by Nathan and others that 10 minutes may be more than enough when we dive in with questions later.

I would support this going to the subcommittee to figure out if there's a way to say that the chair, with latitude, can have longer presentations from the witnesses we've sought out when we agree by consensus that it's someone we really need a lot of time with. Restricting them to a 10-minute presentation on a lifetime of work is both a loss to us and an insult to the witness.

The Chair: Okay. I'm told that if there is a desire on the part of the committee to refer this matter to the steering committee, the mechanics will be the following: first, that we have unanimous

consent to withdraw the motion as amended, and then that we have a motion to refer the question to the steering committee.

Is there unanimous consent to withdraw the motion as amended? There seems to be.

Mr. Scott Reid: One of the consequences of that, I believe, is that the next person in the speaking order—me, in this case—loses his space.

The Chair: Then why don't we go to you first?

Mr. Scott Reid: I would appreciate that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you.

I want to get on the record as pointing out that the original motion, which was put forward by the impartial folks, the clerks, had the effect of giving out question-time totals that caused the Conservatives and the Liberals both to lose some time. The Bloc and the Green Party would both get more time than would be allocated to them based upon the percentage of the vote they got in the last election. The NDP is down a bit. It's not too bad, actually, or it's not off by that much. That's what I should say. I hear Mr. Cullen commenting.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Scott Reid: The system proposed by the Liberals adjusts that so they take a lesser hit and the Conservatives take a more substantial hit to the percentage of time, if we are basing this all on the principle of proportionality, which is the fiction we are expected to believe with regard to how this committee is being run. That is a disappointment.

I can certainly understand why, in their own self-interest, the Liberals would want to move to something that gives them more and the Conservative Party less than in the motion proposed by the impartial people who designed this system for us, but I am at a loss as to determine why that should be regarded as fair by anybody else.

As for the Liberals' suggestion that they circulated something beforehand, they did indeed circulate something beforehand, and my understanding from our staff member is that it was not that proposal that they wound up presenting here. If this is going to be the pattern of behaviour from the Liberal Party on this committee, that is a very significant problem. We need to work closely, honestly, and openly and know that when somebody makes an assertion in public about what they've done in private, it actually reflects the facts.

I'm very disappointed to see that being the case. Having said that, I have no objection to sending this matter off to the subcommittee.

• (1430)

The Chair: Then you're in agreement withdrawing the motion as amended? Okay.

Do we need to have a formal vote or...? No, I think—

Go ahead, Mr. DeCoursey.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: I'd like to mention that the initial suggestion for voting that was given to us by the clerk and the Library of Parliament did not recognize the Greens or the Bloc as legitimate members on this committee, and that in fact it was the proposal that we put in front of this House that recognized the need for every member of this committee to have an opportunity to ask questions, recognizing as well that the Bloc and the Greens would have a second chance to ask questions as members of this committee.

I look forward to working with Mr. Reid collaboratively and collectively to help find a made-in-Canada solution to reform our electoral system, but I just thought I would clarify that point so that it's clear on the record.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Ms. May is next.

Ms. Elizabeth May: I'll sneak in on the record to thank you, Matt, for putting forward that the Bloc and the Greens get questions. I think that was to be automatically assumed and it needed to be amended at this committee, so I appreciate your doing it.

Just to put it on the record, I'm more concerned about making sure that we have time for witnesses first, for evidence and questions, than about the way we go round and round. Your proposal is fine on that, actually.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Thériault, go ahead.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In fairness to the people who prepared the document, I want to say that I realize the motions were models and were not meant to purposely exclude the Bloc Québécois and Green Party members, as my colleague indicated. I want that on the record.

I appreciate the fact we're discussing how much time could be given to the Bloc Québécois and Green Party. I hope we can work quickly and refer the issue to the steering committee.

The Chair: Okay. I understand.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Reid, go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Reid: Just to be clear about the purported generosity towards the Greens and the Bloc Québécois in the Liberal changes to the draft motions that have been put forward for us by the clerk's office, my back-of-the-envelope math tells me that the Bloc and Greens would each have had seven minutes out of a grand total of 58 minutes of witness questioning time. Now they will get a grand total of nine minutes out of a larger questioning period of 67 minutes, which works out to 13%. That 1% is not nothing, but I suspect that it is not as important as the additional 4% that the Liberal Party is getting.

An hon. member: It's four times as much.

Mr. Scott Reid: That's right. There you go.

The Chair: Let me just try to understand here.

You are in favour, Mr. Reid, of withdrawing the motion as amended and sending it to the steering committee. Okay. I think there's general agreement, based on what I've heard, for doing that.

(Amendment withdrawn)

(Motion withdrawn)

The Chair: Now we would need a motion to refer to the steering committee the question of the opening remarks and the questioning of witnesses.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Boulerice, do you want to put forward the motion?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: I like how it's worded. Well done. Bravo.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will vote by a show of hands.

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

The Chair: We have thus dealt with all the routine motions.

• (1435)

[*English*]

Colleagues, we can now discuss, if you wish—and it will be up to us to decide if we want to do so in public or in camera—the working calendar of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thériault, go ahead.

Mr. Luc Thériault: I submitted a motion earlier. I'm not sure when.

The Chair: Yes, you're right. You told me. Sorry.

Go ahead.

Mr. Luc Thériault: We are involved in a tough process that will require a great deal of work. For example, the person with me today takes care of all the parliamentary business and questions from the Bloc Québécois whip, in addition to conducting research for various members.

My motion reads as follows:

That the Bloc Québécois and Green Party be allocated additional resources so they can each retain a resource person (for research, writing, and communication) to help the member work on democratic reform until the Committee's report is tabled in the House.

Regarding my Quebec experience, I know that, at the time, ADQ MNAs were allocated additional resources for research and communication. To have resources available on the Hill, Bloc Québécois members must now cut their budget by 20%.

It would be a lot to ask us to make further cuts to the operating budgets in our constituencies. If we want to reform democratic institutions, perhaps we should show openness to the idea starting now. I think what I've submitted today is a reasonable accommodation to help do the work.

The Chair: In your motion, you're asking for the Bloc Québécois and Green Party to be allocated more resources so that each party can have a resource person to carry out research, writing, and communication work. The resource person can thus help the committee member work on democratic reform until the report is tabled in the House.

Would anyone like to make a comment?

[*English*]

Go ahead, Ms. Sahota.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I have a question for the chair, for the clerks, for everybody on this committee. Is this a matter that we can actually deal with here, or is this for the Board of Internal Economy? Can we even vote on this matter?

The Chair: That is a good question. The answer would no doubt factor into the way members would vote, I suppose.

Does anyone have any light to shed on this?

Go ahead, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I was just trying to reflect on what little experience I've had. The committee can certainly request to allocate funds for travel and for witnesses to come before us, but I think allocating funds beyond the very noble pursuits that were talked about goes beyond our mandate. First, I don't know if we have the power to do it, and second, I'm not sure I'm comfortable doing it, even if we do have the power.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We don't have an exact answer.

Mr. Thériault, do you have anything to add?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Since people seem receptive to the motion, it may be worthwhile for the committee to speak as one to the people concerned to find out whether it's possible. It would be an indication that committee members can vote in favour of the motion or refer it to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. That wouldn't be a problem for me.

The Chair: I'm told there's a problem. The motion is not aimed at anyone in particular and does not refer to the committee.

Mr. Luc Thériault: I can rectify that.

I have spoken with the parliamentary secretary many times about our intention to put forward such a motion. I was told that I could do so as part of our work this afternoon. I am putting forward the motion because the committee is adopting routine motions. It's thus clear that I am addressing this committee.

It's a routine motion issue. An operating budget must be allocated to the committee now or in the future.

• (1440)

The Chair: The clerk could find out about the wording and the admissibility of the motion. Mr. Thériault, would you give her time to find out whether the motion is admissible in its current form, or do you just want us to vote?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Chair, you are giving me an opportunity to say two things.

Since we have not discussed this, I don't know whether my colleagues will consider this request as legitimate. We can look into the form of the motion, but we will not have a debate both on the form and on the substance. Do the committee members agree with the substance of the motion? As for the form of the motion, we can adapt it. We have been adapting other motions for a while.

The Chair: I am being told that the chair decides whether a motion is admissible. If it is agreeable, and to take the time to clarify certain elements, we will check whether the motion is admissible in its current form. If not, you could always change it and move it again.

Mr. Luc Thériault: That's okay with me.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Thériault.

Do the members want to discuss any particular elements of the committee's agenda?

Ms. Romanado, go ahead.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Since quite a bit of information is being sent to the subcommittee, which will then impact the calendar and the setting of the calendar, my suggestion is that we submit a motion to select a date for the next subcommittee meeting at a time that would be mutually beneficial for the members of the committee.

The Chair: Do you have a date to propose?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: My suggestion would be Wednesday, June 29, in the morning, since there might be quite a few of us here on the Hill.

The Chair: Yes, I believe there's something happening that day, apart from the meeting of our steering committee.

Your proposal is that we meet on Wednesday morning, June 29, at a time to be set by the chair. Is everyone in agreement with that suggestion?

We will go to Mr. Cullen, Mr. Boulerice, and then Madame May.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: There are two things. First, I don't know about the availability situation, but I thought tomorrow morning or later today might be a good idea. The only reason is that once the subcommittee meets, it starts the ball rolling in terms of the clerk's ability to start inviting witnesses.

My suspicion is that in that initial list of witnesses, which the parties have all submitted, there will be some clear common ground, people who are clearly the ones we'd like to get started first. Some of them—not all of them, but some of them—are located within a couple of hours' drive or within Ottawa itself.

If we were to get together next week, as you've said, with President Obama coming, there will be a number of MPs in town. Our first committee meeting with witnesses could actually be struck within the week, because normally when committees do those first couple of meetings, there is a certain pro forma group of witnesses we could see.

That was my suggestion. If the steering committee could get together even sooner than that—

The Chair: Can I interrupt?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Sure.

The Chair: I think it's possible to start meetings next week with some witnesses who could appear on very short notice. The analysts could speak to us for 90 minutes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: You just shocked the analysts, Chair. Well done.

The Chair: What I mean is that they could present to us in a 90-minute session—sorry about that—and then I believe the committees directorate could come and speak to us about the use of technology in this process.

We could do that. Let's say the subcommittee met Tuesday afternoon or something. We could have a meeting...or Tuesday morning, and we could have a meeting Tuesday afternoon. We could also invite Mr. Mayrand and Mr. Kingsley. They could appear on very short notice. We could hit the ground running next week.

• (1445)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That would be my intention. Depending on the outcome of the committee's deliberations about what we are doing through July and August, if we want to start that process, the sooner we let the subcommittee make those decisions, the better.

Perhaps I can add one thing, Chair. I don't know if it came around in the discussion we had before about the online participation of Canadians, but there was a motion just beneath that. From some of our conversations with Elections Canada, it appears the committee has to invite Elections Canada to prefer witnesses to us, and I think it would be appropriate for us to move a motion.

I think we need to have an official request from the committee asking Elections Canada for any insight they have on witnesses they think would help. In our conversations, Elections Canada's best experience is actually international—well, not their best; their best experience is here in Canada—but hey have extensive experience internationally dealing with other electoral districts, other countries.

The motion, marked as number 3, is that we seek a list of witness recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer for the committee's consideration, including individuals and organizations with expertise related to potential new voting technologies, international cases, increasing public engagement and participation in voting, and others at his discretion. Other than from the committee, they will not entertain a request for witnesses.

That's the motion we wanted to bring today, to at least....

[*Translation*]

It's the third one on the list.

The Chair: Do you want to move it, Mr. Cullen?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: It's our second motion, but it's under No. 3. It has to do with the chief electoral officer.

The Chair: We have Ms. Romanado's motion. Can you read it again, please?

[*English*]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I'd like to add to that, and I'm sorry that the debate went a little bit sideways.

I'd like to add my suggestion that the steering committee set a date and time for next week, with a meeting of the whole committee the following day. We could start moving along with perhaps a presentation from the analysts as well as with witnesses who might be available to meet.

Under the same notion, we could make sure that all suggestions for witnesses are submitted by this Thursday, if they haven't already been submitted. That way we can start to get a better understanding of the number of witnesses we'll have to invite and we can start laying out the agenda and the work plan that would be required so that when we do meet as a committee, we will have that information available and can hit the ground running.

The Chair: I don't know procedurally how to go about this, but would it be possible to propose a time and day in your motion for parties to submit witnesses, and you suggested Thursday; a time and day for the steering committee to meet, and I think there might be agreement with doing that early next week; a time and day for the analysts to brief us; a time and day for the committees directorate to brief us on the possible uses of technology; and then a time and day—it could all be the same day—for Mr. Mayrand and Mr. Kingsley to appear?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I'll try to capture all of that.

The Chair: Can you? In the meantime....

Go ahead, Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: At the risk of being a stickler, those cannot possibly be amendments, since they are so broadly beyond the scope of a motion that was simply to have the steering committee meet on June 29 at 11 a.m., or whatever the time was. We can have multiple motions that deal with those things, but the first motion—

The Chair: Yes, let's start with the steering committee. Okay.

Your recommendation was to have the steering committee meet on June 29?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: That's correct. It was to have the steering committee meet on June 29, but prior to that, if the members of this committee could submit to the clerk their witness lists no later than, say, end of day this Thursday, so that this could be brought forward to the steering committee—

The Chair: Okay, so Thursday and June 29 are the two key dates.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: That's correct.

Mr. Scott Reid: Those are two separate items.

The Chair: Let's start with the steering committee.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I move that the subcommittee meet on Wednesday, June 29, at 10 a.m.

The Chair: Would anyone like to...?

Go ahead, Monsieur Boulерice.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think it is in fact desirable to adopt a motion so that the steering committee would meet next week and we can start hearing from witnesses as soon as possible. That would be a step in the right direction, and we have to move forward.

At the NDP, we feel that we can meet in the early summer to hear from experts, university representatives and people who will come to give us an overview of all models we will have to study. We must have a common vocabulary and agree on certain terms in order to avoid confusion during our debates.

Afterwards, perhaps starting in mid-August, we will move on to another stage, when we can travel and meet with Canadians before the members hold their own consultations in their ridings.

• (1450)

The Chair: First, do you agree with having a meeting on June 29 at 10 a.m.?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: I agree with having that meeting.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Ms. May, go ahead.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Like Mr. Cullen, I would prefer to begin the steering committee's work as soon as possible; perhaps even today. Why not? We are all here. Wednesday morning is also a good suggestion, since everyone will be here for President Obama's speech.

[*English*]

I think if we can get started with the work of the steering committee this afternoon or tomorrow, that would be much preferable. We've lost a lot of time, and summer looms. I don't want to make myself a special case, but I can't plan anything from now until December 1; none of us can, until we have some idea of the calendar. I'd love to see that moving ahead more quickly.

Having the committee meet on the 30th is certainly fine, but many of us will have a long way to travel to be back in our ridings for Canada Day. My community's first Canada Day event is the afternoon of the 30th. Of course, I will cancel anything in order to participate fully in this committee. I will not miss a meeting. I will be here all the time, but I'd hate to break it to the community that's expecting me to be there to open Canada Day events that I can't make it because the committee's first meeting is on the 30th.

The Chair: Of course. Are you proposing an amendment to Ms. Romanado's motion?

Ms. Elizabeth May: I'm opposing this motion and substituting that the steering committee should meet much sooner.

The Chair: Okay, I got it.

Go ahead, Ms. Romanado.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I agree that time is of the essence, which is why I'm proposing that the next time folks will be in Ottawa, we should absolutely sit down and meet. I was proposing that maybe the morning of the 30th we could actually have the full meeting.

If we were to have a meeting of the steering committee, would we have enough content to have that meeting tomorrow? Would we be prepared? Do we have all the witness lists? If we're going to start mapping out our summer, we need to have that information, and I'm not guaranteed that we actually have that information. In order to have time to think about it and look at it, I think we need to give the committee enough time to reflect on that. I'm also not sure if the analysts can prepare things in less than 24 hours.

The Chair: Your motion's still on the floor here.

Just in the interests of consolidating things—and I hope I'm not overstepping my bounds—other options would be Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday. It is quite understandable, I think, that Ms. May would want to be in her riding for Canada Day. All of us do. We could have the steering committee Monday. We could have it Tuesday morning, and then the analysts and the committees directorate could brief us Tuesday afternoon. Then we could have Mr. Mayrand and Mr. Kingsley Wednesday morning.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I take Ms. Romanado's point very well.

President Obama is here on Wednesday. The steering committee is a much smaller group; it's not all of us. It kick-starts the process. Wednesday we could get in a meeting or two, or perhaps Thursday, depending on flights and all the rest of it. At the very least, that subcommittee can propose something by Wednesday as to what the next number of weeks will look like, which I think is important to everybody. If this committee is going to go full out across the board, we have to know that sooner rather than later, so why not do that?

I like your suggestion very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You mean to have the subcommittee Monday or Tuesday morning?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes, we could have it on Tuesday morning, to get started.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Romanado.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Could you clarify? Are you saying Tuesday morning would be the steering committee, and then there would be meetings on Wednesday and Thursday, and we would finish early enough on Thursday so folks could go back?

The Chair: Then we would just keep going. I think the idea is to be out of here Thursday, if possible.

A voice: There's the steering committee.

The Chair: Yes, there's the steering committee, but we could invite the analysts for Tuesday afternoon. We could invite Mr. Kingsley for Wednesday morning. I don't know what...

• (1455)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Scott Reid is right that we're going way off the motion that's on the floor, but I like thinking outside the box for a moment.

Is there any chance that the steering committee could meet this week, perhaps tomorrow or the day after? I'm just wondering if that's a possibility for people. Again, even if we meet Thursday morning early as a committee, I will have to cancel my participation in the opening of Canada Day in my riding. It's okay, and I will do it, but British Columbia is a lot farther away than you think. It takes a while.

The Chair: At the risk of overstepping bounds here, based on what I've heard, we could get started Tuesday morning and be out of here—except for Mr. Obama's speech—on Wednesday. People could catch their flights Thursday, and we'd still get a lot of work done.

The way we could proceed—though the committee will decide, of course—is that Ms. Romanado could withdraw her specific motion, and somebody could present something along the lines of what we seem to be gathering consensus on, and then we could get on with it.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Perhaps before I propose what you have suggested, Chair, Ms. Romanado will withdraw the motion so I can do that.

The Chair: Do I understand that if Ms. Romanado withdraws her motion, you want to present something?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I'm happy to withdraw it, as long as we have a motion. The earliest that I could meet is next Tuesday. My apologies, but...

The Chair: I think that would work.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I don't know how to put this in proper legalese, but I would move that committee members submit their witness lists by this Thursday, the end of the week. Is that fair for committee members?

This is the initial tranche of expert witnesses. Let's say it's by this Friday, to give the analysts at least enough time to have that first look at the witness lists. The steering committee will meet Tuesday at 10 a.m., with the hope that the first full committee meeting will be Wednesday—

The Chair: We would meet Tuesday afternoon with the analysts and the committees directorate. It would be a three-hour meeting.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's correct. That sounds great.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Could we make the deadline Thursday, since Friday is a holiday in Quebec?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I knew there was a problem with Friday.

The Chair: If I can recap, and maybe—

Mr. Scott Reid: On a point of order, what was the point Mrs. Romanado was making? It sounds excellent, but I didn't catch it until it was done.

The Chair: It was to have Thursday for the witness lists.

Mr. Scott Reid: And the reason for that is...?

An hon. member: Friday is Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day.

The Chair: It's *la fête nationale* in Quebec.

Mr. Scott Reid: It's Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day. Of course.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Cullen, you can include this in a motion you will move in committee.

First, the preliminary lists of witnesses must be submitted by June 23. The steering committee would meet on Tuesday, June 27, at 10 a.m., and that would be followed by a second three-hour meeting of the committee—for example, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The next day, on Wednesday morning, we would invite Mr. Kingsley and Mr. Mayrand. Afterwards—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: What you are proposing will lead to scheduling conflicts for some of us. Would it be possible to do all of that on Wednesday for four hours and to then hold a brief committee meeting on Thursday morning?

The Chair: A motion first has to be moved that we could always amend later.

Do we have unanimous consent for Ms. Romanado to withdraw her motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion withdrawn)

The Chair: We now need another motion.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I don't know whether there is a conflict, but

[English]

The recommendation is to have the subcommittee at 10 o'clock on Tuesday, with the full committee...?

•(1500)

The Chair: That would be on Tuesday afternoon from one to four o'clock, for briefings from the analysts and...

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I hate making committee schedules on the go, but we're going to need to have some flexibility if we're hoping to get something started.

Is Tuesday out completely for...? Yes. Okay, then is it Wednesday morning?

The Chair: It's Wednesday morning for the briefing from the analysts...?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Obama arrives in the afternoon at three or four o'clock, I believe.

The Chair: Yes, that's in the afternoon.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right. Then can we begin at 10 o'clock on Wednesday morning and go for three hours?

The Chair: Probably we could do nine o'clock.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: We'd begin at nine o'clock Wednesday morning and go for three hours?

The Chair: Yes, and then on Thursday morning we'd have Mr. Mayrand and Mr. Kingsley...?

An hon. member: No.

The Chair: That doesn't work for you?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: It's not working for Madam May.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Look, it's critical that the electoral reform committee get started. I just need to be able to let the folks in my riding know that I won't be at the Canada Day opening ceremonies on Thursday evening. They'll understand. It's just what it is.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Cullen, do you have a motion to present to us?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes, Mr. Chair: that the steering committee meet Tuesday morning at 10 o'clock and that the full committee meet Wednesday morning at 9 o'clock for a three-hour session, or that the full committee meet at 10 o'clock Wednesday morning for a three-hour session...? Going once....

That's it. Do you want to do a second one?

Mr. Scott Reid: I thought that included.... In all fairness, the drafting was occurring somewhere other than with you, Mr. Cullen, but I thought the suggestion was that the Wednesday meeting be with our analysts.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes, so in that three-hour meeting, why not have the first 90 minutes with analysts and the second 90 minutes with Mr. Mayrand and Mr. Kingsley?

Mr. Scott Reid: I object to that part.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Oh. Is it the construction or the witnesses?

Mr. Scott Reid: It's to having those witnesses at that time.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Okay. Do you want to—

Mr. Scott Reid: I can explain why. There are two reasons.

Number one, Mr. Mayrand and Mr. Kingsley should not both be put into a 90-minute spot. I don't think they should be at the same meeting. We have a former chief electoral officer with one set of information to give us and another serving Chief Electoral Officer who has many questions that we need to deal with.

This is of particular importance to my party, of course, which has tried, through the very limited interaction time we've had with Mr. Mayrand, to establish what would be the deadlines and what would be the issues that would prevent us from having a national referendum on this issue. Having anything less than a full meeting with Mr. Mayrand alone would be unacceptable. I note that he never comes before us as a joint witness under other circumstances, and I think that would be reasonable here.

A final note on this subject is this. Under the plan, on Tuesday we design the rules about how long a presentation will be. Mr. Mayrand in particular has always emphasized the need to receive full information on that well in advance. He's very careful in his preparations. Saying to him that he has 24 hours to pull together and restructure everything would clearly not be acceptable to him.

Mr. Kingsley hasn't expressed these concerns in the same way as clearly as Mr. Mayrand has, but I suspect that it would be a discourtesy to him to invite him under those circumstances.

It's a different story with the analysts, who are doing a totally different kind of presentation.

The Chair: Right. Okay.

You're okay with the steering committee, with a three-hour session with the analysts and the committees directorate, but you're not good with Mr. Mayrand and Mr. Kingsley on the Wednesday together or

Mr. Scott Reid: Or indeed with any other external witness.

The Chair: Okay. I've got it.

Go ahead, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I was going to suggest that if Mr. Reid objects to this arrangement I can maybe understand, but if he just wants to hear from Mr. Mayrand, would that be something that he would be open to?

Having the Chief Electoral Officer come forward is probably as much about posing questions to us as committee members for what we need to consider when we're going through this process as it is about having somebody who runs the elections answer our questions. If there's some separation, I don't know if Mr. Reid or other committee members are open to that.

The Chair: Would you like to propose a motion that we do the steering committee on Tuesday at 10 a.m.?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right. It would be that the steering committee would meet on Tuesday at 10 a.m. The—

The Chair: The analysts and the committees directorate—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: The committee meets at.... I think we landed on 10 o'clock on Wednesday?

An hon. member: Yes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's for an hour and a half, and then there would be an hour and a half with Mr. Mayrand.

The Chair: No, no. We're talking about having the analysts for an hour and a half and then the committees directorate for an hour and a half to talk about the use of technologies. That would be a three-hour block, essentially.

• (1505)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I see. Can we get agreement on that? If we can get agreement on that, then if there's a—

The Chair: If you propose that motion, we can.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's the motion I put forward for that three-hour meeting.

The Chair: Are there any comments? Does anyone want to intervene?

Ms. Ruby Sahota: They're both on the same day. You're proposing that they're both on Wednesday, one after the other.

The Chair: It's Tuesday morning and Wednesday morning....

Ms. Ruby Sahota: For the witnesses that we're talking about right now, they would be one after the other, just separated. I just wanted to clarify that.

The Chair: Just so we're all clear, 10 a.m. on Tuesday is the steering committee, and 10 a.m. on Wednesday is the researchers and the committees directorate.

What about Mr. Mayrand? Did you have anything to say about Mr. Mayrand?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: We can just start with this one piece first and then move on to Mr. Mayrand.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: Everything that's in the motion, as I now understand it, is good, with one small exception. We should not presuppose the 90-minute slots, because we haven't actually worked out the exact discussion of the rotations, how long the slots are, whether members of the public go at the end, and all that stuff.

Can we just say they will be separated, that one will happen at 10 a.m. and the next one at...?

The Chair: Are you talking about the analysts now?

Mr. Scott Reid: Yes, that's right. We haven't worked out what our rotation is in terms of questions.

The Chair: Right. They can, I'm sure, adjust by a half an hour or an hour. That's not going to be a problem.

Mr. Scott Reid: All right.

The Chair: That's your motion, Mr. Cullen, and I don't see a real desire to engage in debate on this. I will call the vote.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We'll be meeting as a steering committee on Tuesday, and then Wednesday at the same time, at 10 a.m. It will be the analysts, and we may jig that a bit, followed by the committees directorate on the use of technology. I think we have a plan.

Go ahead, Ms. May.

Ms. Elizabeth May: I hate to trespass on the question of whether one can presume from our plans for Tuesday and Wednesday that we're not booking a Thursday meeting, or is that still a possibility?

The Chair: I haven't seen a motion for a Thursday meeting.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: I think Ms. May's argument to get home for Canada Day is a good one. I think everyone could benefit from that, including our constituents. I have faith that the subcommittee will find a suitable date soon after Canada Day for us to get back and get to work.

[Translation]

I believe that's what we voted for.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: The multitudes to whom I will be serving hamburgers Thursday evening thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Cullen, go ahead.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Just to add to that piece, we discussed having witnesses in, but I don't know if it was passed in the motion.

The Chair: That's a separate motion. Why don't we do that as a separate motion?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes. Since Friday is a holiday, we should look to have all of our witnesses in by end of day Thursday so that when the subcommittee comes together Tuesday morning, we'll have something to work on with the analysts. Does that seem fair?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: This is another point of order. As worded by Mr. Cullen, it's all of our witnesses, but as paraphrased by the chair, it's our preliminary list of witnesses. I would like to confirm—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: No, it's not exhaustive.

Mr. Scott Reid: It's not exhaustive. Okay. That's critical. As long as that's the case, we'll be happy.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Cullen, is this the motion you are moving? Can we vote?

Would all in favour of Mr. Cullen's motion raise their hand?

[English]

Mr. Scott Reid: Which one of Mr. Cullen's motions?

The Chair: It's the one for getting your preliminary list of witnesses in for the 22nd. Is that the 22nd or is it the 23rd?

[Translation]

It is in fact Thursday, June 23.

Does anyone have any other motions to move?

Ms. Romanado, go ahead.

[English]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I'm not sure if it's a motion or just a suggestion, but for the assistance of the steering committee, folks could also submit any preference in terms of sitting over the summer. Whether it be two days a week for the rest of the summer or a block of time, it would be helpful for the steering committee to have that information when we're planning what we're going to do. I would recommend that information also be submitted by end of day Thursday.

The Chair: Perfect. I don't think we need a motion for that.

[Translation]

Mr. Thériault, the floor is yours.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Chair, I have a series of questions to ask, and I am not sure whether I have to submit them to the steering committee.

One of those questions has to do with the overall budget provided for the committee. I assume a budget will be provided and, in the interest of transparency, it would be a good idea for everyone to know what it is.

There was talk about holding consultations in ridings. The government's motion provides a timeframe for that. When will we discuss the way we will proceed? We are talking about what we will do, but if 338 members have to hold consultations, we will have to ensure that the process is fair and serious.

What will be the budget allocated to the members for that purpose? Will a single consultation session be considered sufficient? Will the steering committee be making that decision? If so, the information will have to be sent to the members quickly to give them an opportunity to get organized. Time is going by pretty quickly. August will bring a new school year and other considerations.

I have many questions to ask, but I guess I can keep them for the steering committee's meeting.

•(1510)

The Chair: As for the budget, we have \$300,000.

Concerning the consultation process, we could discuss it in the detail. That will give us an opportunity to provide the members with a procedure to follow when they hold consultations with their constituents. I think those aspects could be discussed at the steering committee's meetings.

Mr. Luc Thériault: We need to know how many Canadian cities will—

The Chair: Exactly. It's a matter of logistics.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Okay. We have a long road ahead.

The Chair: Mr. Reid, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Reid: This is on an entirely different subject.

I know we don't want to presuppose or get ahead of the steering committee in terms of suggesting witnesses, but seeing as everybody else got in the game, I would suggest that any normal committee studying a legislative proposal or a change to the system would start with the relevant minister as a witness.

I suggest that we try to get Minister Monsef at the earliest convenient opportunity. I think the nature of the work the analysts are submitting to us means it's reasonable for them to appear ahead of her, but I do think we should be attempting to get Minister Monsef at the earliest reasonable opportunity, with regard always to considerations of availability, as we would with any minister in any similar situation.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I agree entirely with Mr. Reid. Through Mr. Holland—it's the traditional role of the parliamentary secretary to be a liaison between the committee and the minister—I think it would be very helpful for us to start with any comments Minister Monsef might have about what this committee is engaged in.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: I would tend to agree that we have Mr. Holland here to help us through that process. We've also, to my count, heard from the minister many, many, many times in the House of Commons. Now we have work that we need to do—speaking with academics, speaking with international experts, getting a sense of

this process—before we endeavour to go down that road, to my mind.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I think this is a question of witnesses as well, so we should leave it up to the steering committee to schedule the minister, if possible. It's not a discussion we should have here at this time.

The Chair: Mr. Holland, do you have something to add from the perspective of—

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax, Lib.): I would just say that the minister obviously would look forward to speaking before the committee. I know that the steering committee will look at availability, the hearing of witnesses, and appropriate scheduling. We'll look forward to the committee's guidance on when it would be most valuable to appear.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Holland.

Mr. Deltell, go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I think it's a tremendous opportunity for everybody to know exactly what's in the mind of the minister. We certainly asked her plenty of questions, day after day after day, but we had only 30-second answers. Now we'll have plenty of time and plenty of questions. It will also give her plenty of time to explain what the target is with this bill, especially for this committee.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Duly noted. Of course, we will hold other discussions on those issues, especially as part of the steering committee's work.

[*English*]

If there's nothing else on the....

Yes, Madam May.

•(1515)

Ms. Elizabeth May: I'd just like to congratulate the chair on his election. I didn't get a chance to take the floor to congratulate the first vice-chair or the second vice-chair. I'd also like to say that I think this committee has started out in an excellent fashion. I think every single motion was approved unanimously. May it continue to be so.

The Chair: Thank you.

On that note, the committee is adjourned.

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