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## Standing Committee on Finance

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, November 13, 2007**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Rob Merrifield**

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## Standing Committee on Finance

Tuesday, November 13, 2007

• (1530)

[English]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Elizabeth Kingston):** Good afternoon, all.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), I'd like to proceed to the election of the chair of the finance committee, please.

I'm now ready to receive motions to that effect.

Mr. Del Mastro.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Clerk. I'd like to nominate Rob Merrifield as chair of the finance committee.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Shoot. I thought it was going to be me.

**The Clerk:** Are there any other...?

It is moved by Dean Del Mastro that Rob Merrifield be elected chair of this committee.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I duly declare Rob Merrifield as chair of the finance committee.

Congratulations.

I now proceed to the election of the vice-chairs. The first vice-chair shall be a member of the official opposition party and the second vice-chair shall be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

We shall proceed first of all to the election of the first vice-chair for the official opposition. I am ready to receive nominations.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** I propose Massimo Pacetti.

**The Clerk:** It is moved by John McKay.

[Translation]

John McKay moves that Massimo Pacetti be elected vice-chair of the committee.

All in favour?

(Motion agreed to.)

[English]

**The Clerk:** I declare Massimo Pacetti duly elected vice-chair of the committee.

[Translation]

We shall now proceed to the election of the second vice-chair, who shall be a member of another opposition party.

Mr. St-Cyr.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** I would like to nominate Paul Crête.

**The Clerk:** Are there any other nominations?

(Motion agreed to.)

**The Clerk:** Congratulations, everyone.

I declare Mr. Crête elected vice-chair of the committee.

I invite Mr. Merrifield to take the chair.

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** While the clerk is handing out the routine motions—I think that's the next order of business—I want to say thank you for your confidence.

I will say, we'll get to know each other very quickly, I'm sure. The way I see committees is that committees are animals unto themselves. They report only to Parliament and by extension serve the people of Canada and not a minister or ministry.

When it comes to the rules of the committee, I will apply them as fairly as I possibly can. We will start as close to being on time as we can and we'll only go over if there's unanimous consent to do so, respecting the time of the committee.

That gives you an idea of how I expect to run the committee and hopefully respect everyone's views around the table in due course.

Everyone has the routine motions. I guess these are the customary motions that were adopted by this committee in the last session.

Would we entertain a motion to accept them the way they are, or do we have to go through each one individually? If you would be prepared to, we would accept the motion to accept them as is. If not, we'd open it up to debate.

Let's start them one at a time, then, if you would like. Or do we want to just open it up to debate and then see whether we can change it?

Go ahead, Thomas.

•(1535)

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to raise an issue in advance that I want to have a chance to address. That is why we cannot agree to accept what are called the routine motions the way they are. It is worth starting with a comment on the difference between the English and French wording. In English, they are called "routine motions," as if it were a matter of routine and all we needed to do was adopt them. In French, however, we call them *motions de régie interne*. There is a big difference, to me.

The fourth motion deals with time limits for witnesses' statements and questioning. We know that, later on, you are going to make the following motion: that, generally, when the time comes to hear witnesses, there will be a first round in which each party present may ask a question, which is perfectly normal, in our opinion. However, during the second round, which would consist of seven five-minute questions in all, no time would be allocated to the New Democratic Party. You said earlier that it was a matter of routine, but I note that, in other Parliamentary committees, that is not how things are divided.

I would therefore like to inform you now about what I consider to be a point of order when we address the fourth motion, because, naturally, we cannot agree to that.

[English]

**The Chair:** That's fine, if that's your only concern with all of them.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** That is our only concern.

[English]

**The Chair:** Let's take the other concern with all of them, and then we'll try to do them. We will go one by one, but let's hear from Thierry.

Thierry, go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** I think that Paul wants to talk about the second motion, which is a problem for us. To answer the question from my colleague from the NDP, I would like to specify that what is being proposed here today is identical to what was presented the last time to the Committee on Finance. It simply represents one turn per committee member. There are 11 turns. One turn is excluded because the chair does not speak. This corresponds exactly to what we were saying. According to tradition, once we are at the twelfth turn, the NDP takes the floor. This was simply a matter of respecting the principle that each committee member gets a turn.

[English]

**The Chair:** Fine.

Paul.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** The second motion goes like this:

That the Sub-Committee of Agenda and Procedure be created and be composed of a Chair, two Vice-Chairs, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and a member of the other opposition party.

As far as I know, the Parliamentary Secretary was not traditionally a member of the steering committee. The fact that the secretary representing the Minister is taking part in the steering committee at that moment affects the committee's actions.

My second comment is about the tenth motion, which says:

[ . . . ] unless otherwise ordered, each Committee member be allowed to have one staff person present [ . . . ]

I would like it to read: ". . . have his or her staff present at an *in camera* meeting." That way, each Member of Parliament could have more than one person. A researcher could be present.

•(1540)

[English]

**The Chair:** Let's do one at a time. I can see we're going to get bogged down if we don't.

Let's go to the first motion, on the service analysis from the Library of Parliament.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** In number two we have the establishment of a subcommittee of agenda and procedure.

Is there agreement, Paul?

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** I want the words "the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance" removed.

[English]

**The Chair:** That is exactly what you had last time, I believe. We'll open that to debate.

Mike.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** I think we should disagree with that, because if you look at the numbers here, the only Conservative at that committee would be the chair in this case. The whole concept—and maybe I'm wrong—is that the chair should try to be neutral and fair, not only here at committee but at subcommittee, at procedure.

So we need a representative from the Conservative or government side. I don't think there's any better representative than the parliamentary secretary, who knows what's going on in terms of legislation that's coming forward, and so forth—for the position, not necessarily for the guy.

My view is that it should stay the way it was in the previous session. It worked and we were able to move the agenda along.

**The Chair:** Is there discussion on this?

Garth.

**Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I agree with my colleagues from the Bloc in this instance. I may be showing my age here, but I remember when we had committees that acted in a much more independent fashion. It would have been unthinkable for a parliamentary secretary to really sit on a committee that planned the activities of a committee going forward, because the parliamentary secretary—no offence to the current one here—is really a mouthpiece for the minister.

This committee is supposed to act independently. It reports to the House of Commons, not the Government of Canada.

**The Chair:** I made that point prior to your getting here. But we intend to run the committee so it reports to Parliament.

Are you finished with that point?

**Hon. Garth Turner:** I guess so.

**The Chair:** Mike.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** The clarification here is on the removal of the parliamentary secretary. We have two vice-chairs from the opposition party and a member of the other opposition party, so that means they're all opposition members. Nobody from the government sat on this committee, other than the chair. If you are going to replace the parliamentary secretary in this committee, I think it's only fair—and based on the comments of my colleague who just spoke—that we have somebody from the government side at this committee. I think the chair should stay neutral.

**The Chair:** Ted.

**Mr. Ted Menzies (MacLeod, CPC):** Well, perhaps it would be suggested that I should stay neutral, but I didn't suggest that and the chair actually recognized me, so I shall continue.

Not that I'm looking for more committees to sit on, but let's bear in mind I'm only one vote on this committee. As the minister's representative, and to have an understanding what direction the committee is taking and to help make sure that we actually can get some proper things done at this committee, I would suggest that I think it's only appropriate that the parliamentary secretary sit there to help carry the burden of all the other members.

**The Chair:** Okay, I just have a point about a steering committee. First of all, hopefully they're not used too terribly much. Hopefully we can agree on the direction of the committee here. When you do get into the steering committee, it's not so much by vote, but by consensus. Hopefully it's a way of getting around roadblocks when we can't agree here on the exact direction of committee.

Thomas, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Chairman, I simply want to say that I support the Bloc québécois on this issue. I find it completely inappropriate for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance to sit on the steering committee. It has already been established that one person per party be present, and it should stay that way. This would be a change to what existed before.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, we've gone around.

Dean.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** I just want to point out for the benefit of committee members that the previous parliamentary secretary, Madam Ablonczy, did sit on the steering committee. This is not a new change. She was most certainly our representative on the steering committee. I don't think that negatively affected the operations of the steering committee. I actually thought the steering committee worked quite well. With all due respect to the opposition members, I fail to see the problem with Mr. Menzies being the government representative on the steering committee.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mike.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and just to quote Marleau and Montpetit:

Where committees have agreed to establish subcommittees on agenda and procedure (steering committees), their memberships have varied considerably to suit the needs of individual committees. This subcommittee typically consists of the chair of the committee, the vice-chairs, representatives of each of the other recognized parties and, on committees having a departmental responsibility, the parliamentary secretary.

So it's there in writing that this is the way we've done it. We've done it, to my understanding, this way for many moons and I don't see why we should be moving off it today.

**The Chair:** Okay, we're not going to go round and round forever on this, because you get into steering committees only to try to build consensus to help move a committee along and hopefully we don't have to do that much. That's not the biggest issue in the world.

Anyway, Paul, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** I am ready to vote on the motion. The text that Mr. Wallace read corresponds exactly to the way we do it. He was talking about the chair, the vice-chairs and the other parties and the fact that all the parties would be represented. That is exactly the way we do it if we remove the Parliamentary Secretary from this list. If it is necessary for him to sit on the steering committee to talk to us about a specific topic or to convey information that the Department wants to give us, we could invite him as a resource person. However, during official meetings and decision making, the members of the committee who shall be present are those provided for. We can vote on this if necessary. The opinion of each party is well known.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, let's put this to a vote.

(Motion negated)

**The Chair:** Okay, it is deemed that we will change it so that he is out.

What's that?

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** I move another motion on that item.

**The Chair:** On this item?

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Yes. If the parliamentary secretary is not there, I'd like to move that a member of the governing party be—other than the parliamentary secretary.

(Motion negated)

**The Chair:** Let's move on to item three.

Do you have another motion on this one?

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** No, for item three.

**The Chair:** Okay, go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** My experience at the ethics and access to information and privacy committee is that when there's no quorum we only receive and publish evidence. It says "three members are present, including one member of the opposition". I would like to see it include one member of the government, and we've done that before.

**The Chair:** So what you're saying is to have one member of the opposition and one member of the government.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** There are three members at present, including one member of the opposition and one member of the government.

**The Chair:** There will be one member of the government. Okay.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Now I'm going to speak to it.

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** I think it's only fair. We talk about these committees trying to not represent a particular ministry and so on and so forth. I think we're trying to keep the chair as neutral as possible on this, and in this case then, the only government member might be the chairman. It doesn't mention anywhere whether a vice-chair could run this meeting or that it has to be the chair. I think it's only fair, if we're going to have the committee meeting, even to receive information, that the government is represented by at least one body. I don't think that's an unreasonable request.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Pacetti.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It's quite simple. I'm opposed to the amendment, because I feel that there are three opposition parties, and we can have one member from one of the three opposition parties. The government is only one party, and by one member of the government not showing up, it can actually inhibit or prevent the committee from sitting, and we don't want that to happen. It's a veto power.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll go to John.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** I was just going to make the same point, which is that it effectively gives the government a veto, which I don't think is appropriate.

**The Chair:** Well, as I read it, it would be that the chair would have to be there, as well as the other members, so I don't think it would be a veto. Nonetheless....

Go ahead, Paul.

•(1550)

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** I would like Mr. Wallace to tell me if, with his proposal, there would be no meeting in the absence of government MPs. This would give you the full power to ensure that there is no meeting.

[English]

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** That's correct. When there is no quorum, and a meeting is called, there have to be at least three members, and one of them has to be from the government instead of all of them being from the opposition.

Yes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** So, there would not be a meeting? The government would decide if there was to be a meeting or not?

**A voice:** Yes, and that is the problem.

[English]

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** It's to receive and publish evidence. It's not to create a report. It's an absence of quorum.

**The Chair:** Okay. Is there any further debate on this? We're not going to stay on it very long. Are you good to go?

Do you agree on the amendment, which is to add one more member from the government?

(Amendment negated)

**The Clerk:** You have to vote on the motion.

**The Chair:** That was on the amendment. Now, on the motion, do you agree on motion number three the way it is written?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** On motion four, on time limits and witnesses, this is the one the Bloc had some concerns about.

We'll go to John.

**Hon. John McCallum:** At the bottom it says that when a minister appears, people get seven minutes for the first round. A minister is more important than we are, but I don't think he's infinitely more important, so I would propose that there be a twenty-minute limit for the minister.

**The Chair:** There would be a twenty-minute limit.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** That's for his opening remarks.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Yes, for his opening remarks.

**The Chair:** Oh, okay.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Otherwise, the minister can use up all the time.

**Hon. John McKay:** And it's happened.

**Hon. John McCallum:** So I would propose that you add—

**The Chair:** As a whole row of ex-ministers, I think you know what you're talking about.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Perhaps twenty minutes is too long. I'd be open to amendments.

**An hon. member:** Make it fifteen.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Fifteen.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Can I get ten?

**Hon. John McCallum:** It should be fifteen, I think.

**The Chair:** You want to actually add another spot there so when the minister appears, there is a twenty-minute maximum for the minister.

**An hon. member:** Fifteen.

**The Chair:** Okay, that's interesting.

**Hon. John McCallum:** That is for his opening statement.

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead, Dean.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** I think, obviously, that when we have ministers come to make a presentation before a committee, we should be open to allowing ministers to speak for as long as is required to present the various topics they may be presenting. Now, I'm not suggesting that they eat up all their time, but I think there should be some room to manoeuvre on this. I think probably twenty minutes is more reasonable than fifteen. I just don't think fifteen minutes is a lot of time, quite frankly.

**An hon. member:** They get more in the House of Commons.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** I think there'd be a lot more value added to committee if we provided the ministers with enough time to adequately present a topic.

**The Chair:** Massimo.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** I'll be quick. Thank you.

I think fifteen minutes is a good starting point, and if we have to add to that, the minister can ask us for permission or consent and we can give it to him on a case-by-case basis. But I think fifteen minutes is reasonable and a sufficient time, especially if he comes here. He usually comes for an hour.

**The Chair:** Ted.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** I would be very concerned if Canadians thought we were trying to limit the time a minister was given to report to a House of Commons standing committee. That doesn't sound like anything I would like to take back to my constituents. I think, with all due respect, this is trying to somehow muzzle a minister's discussion or openness with this committee. In the question and answer period afterwards, the minister has lots of time to answer those questions, and I think we have adequate time in here. But I think to bring us the message that he needs to bring, and which this committee needs to hear, I certainly can't accept fifteen minutes. I think we could accept twenty minutes. I'm assuming the minister would think that's enough; some ministers take longer than that.

I see consensus building on the other side.

• (1555)

**The Chair:** No, don't mistake that for consensus.

Mr. St-Cyr.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** I want to remind you of the nature of our work. When the Minister appear before us, he answers our questions; he does not come to put on a show or engage in political marketing. He has plenty of means at his disposal to speak and to address a subject in the House and outside the House. When he comes to committee, he comes to answer our questions, and I think it is reasonable to ask that he limit his opening statement to a few

minutes. As for the show aspect, in any case, you know full well that the media will not report the Minister's 20, 30 or 40 minutes on the evening news. They are going to report his seven- or eight-second sound bite. He will therefore have plenty of time in 15 minutes to deliver his seven- or eight-second sound bite.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Usually, when the Minister of Finance appears before the committee, it lasts about an hour. I think that 15 minutes are enough. If it is a very important issue and he wants to come for an hour and a half, we could maybe grant him 20 minutes, but beyond that, I do not believe that we are prepared to increase the Minister's time for his presentation. I am in favour of 15 minutes.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Garth.

**Hon. Garth Turner:** I have to say, Chairman, as there are a lot of members on this committee and given the fact that a minister typically appears for an hour, I think fifteen minutes is fine, because in 45 minutes we're only going to get in a couple of rounds—maybe three rounds of questioning. This is an important committee that does work affecting almost all Canadians, and all of us here take it very seriously. I think giving the minister twenty minutes to speak, or an unlimited period of time, is wrong for the committee. I agree with Monsieur St-Cyr that our job here is to question the minister. The minister has many opportunities to speak.

**The Chair:** Can I just throw something in?

This may be what I hear from you. What you're saying on this side is that we don't want a minister to monopolize the time, and that fifteen minutes seems to be enough time if we've got an hour. So why wouldn't you say fifteen minutes per hour? And as it's for two hours and he may stay for two hours, then it would be appropriate to give him thirty minutes.

Is that fair? Is there a consensus? Does everyone agree with that?

Done.

Now the motion, with that amendment—

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Mr. Chairman, just to clear this up, we're giving witnesses other than the minister up to ten minutes. Is that correct? We're not touching that?

**The Chair:** Yes.

Thomas.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Further to what I told you earlier, I take due note of what my colleague from the Bloc, Mr. St-Cyr, said about there being a custom. Maybe it was Mr. Crête who mentioned that, when there is a twelfth question, it customarily goes to the New Democratic Party. I simply would like it noted down. I do not think that there would be a problem with noting down this type of customary practice, and it would reassure us.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** The clerk indicates to me that the practice of the committee was to follow that procedure the last time, at any rate.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Sometimes, Mr. Chairman, what goes without saying goes even better when said.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, so you'd like to make it as an amendment.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Yes, please.

[English]

**The Chair:** Fair enough. So if it goes to the twelfth one, then it goes to the NDP on the second round.

Okay, are we...?

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** In both cases, Mr. Chairman, it makes a difference. In both cases, if there is a twelfth turn, it goes to the NDP. I am talking about the second round in both cases. Is that clear?

• (1600)

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, so that's what we have to do, the NDP on both...the minister here, or a regular.

All right?

Okay, so I think the motion, as amended, was with the fifteen minutes per hour for the minister and the addition of the NDP at the twelfth, on the second round, minister or non-minister.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Okay, there we go. We're just moving right along here.

How about number five? This is travel and living expenses for witnesses.

**An hon. member:** So moved.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Number six, the distribution of documents with translation.

**An hon. member:** So moved.

(Motion agreed to)

**Hon. John McKay:** I'd like to comment on that. We seem to spend endless amounts of time with witnesses coming in who have their documents in one official language. There has to be some sort of mechanism so that the witnesses have either access to translation or some other means by which they are not embarrassed when they arrive here.

**The Chair:** Yes, this is always a sore spot.

So what you're saying is that if they come in with one official language, there has to be an ability to get it to us. Is that what you're saying, or is there access? The clerk is saying they do have access.

**Hon. John McKay:** I'm not sure what the mechanism is. I'm sure Elizabeth sends out notice saying it has to be in both official languages, but a lot of these witnesses don't have access to translation services.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Elizabeth, you speak to it.

**The Clerk:** Thank you, Mr. Merrifield.

The witnesses may or may not produce a document in both official languages, but the committee of the House of Commons will certainly provide the translation of the document in an expeditious fashion and send it out to the committee members as soon as possible, as soon as it's translated.

**Hon. John McKay:** How long is "expeditious"?

**The Clerk:** It depends on the size of the document.

**Hon. John McKay:** I'm not going to belabour the point. I just feel badly for a lot of witnesses who work hard on their documentation, produce it in one official language, and then they get embarrassed and rejected at the committee, and it starts off their testimony in a bad light.

**The Chair:** Okay.

What the clerk is saying is that when you're travelling there have been occasions when it's only one language that has been allowed at this committee. So I don't know if you do that through unanimous consent or what you do with it, but that shows good will. Hopefully, we'll respect the witnesses enough.

This is always about communication. We can fight the language war in another place.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** I just feel that the witnesses who appear work hard, but a lot of times they appear before the committee and don't realize that translation is available to them. A lot of times it's the witnesses' fault because at the last minute they make changes, but it doesn't make our job any easier when we don't have access to the witnesses.

I'm not asking for any amendment. I just want to make sure the witnesses are aware that they have translation services available. A lot of times witnesses have appeared and have not been made aware that those services are available.

**The Chair:** Are we okay with this? As long as we show some discretion on this one, is that fair?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay, it's moved.

Number seven, we have a motion on working meals.

**An hon. member:** So moved.

(Motion agreed to on division)

• (1605)

**The Chair:** Moving on to number eight, in camera meeting transcripts, we need a motion for this.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** So moved.

[English]

**The Chair:** All in favour?

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

**The Chair:** Number nine concerns notice of substantive motions. This is the 48 hours.



**An hon. member:** So moved.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Just to clarify, Mr. Chair, what do we mean by 48 hours? Does that mean 48 hours or does that mean two working days or...? We seem to have a problem with this, and I just want to clear it up.

So today the committee will convene at 5:30. Will we be able to present a motion for discussion for Thursday at 3:30?

I just want to make it clear, that's all. I'm open to whatever the committee agrees on.

**The Chair:** Rick.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** I think that's a fair point. One way to help might be to look at how other committees decide when the time starts. I'm on a couple of committees where once the motion gets submitted to the clerk, the clock starts.

**The Chair:** Paul, and then John.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** I would like for us to find a solution that would allow us to debate, on Thursday, a motion drafted following a meeting on the previous Tuesday. If we debate on Tuesday afternoon and draft a motion on Wednesday morning, it will not be debated until a week later. That is too long. We have to find a way for the number of hours...Let's be practical. We work from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. If we drafted something before 7:00 p.m. so that we could work on it the following Thursday, we would need 36 hours, or 30 hours, which would give us enough time. The ideal time would be 24 hours.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I think what the clerk is saying is that "two sleeps" is the general term. But it depends on how long you sleep, I guess.

John, go ahead.

**Hon. John McKay:** I don't need that many sleeps. I would just go for the one sleep. I would support the notion that it be 24 hours. I've never quite understood why it takes—

Most motions can be written on the back of a napkin, and frequently are. I see no real reason why we need 48 hours to study a motion that's frequently less than a paragraph in length.

So I would propose that 24 hours deals with the problem that Mr. Crête just raised. In practice there is really no good reason why you need 48 hours.

**The Chair:** I think the history of committees has been 48 hours. I think the original concern was that at 46 hours, and you're going to stop it—Generally it's the two-sleep rule, two days.

**Hon. John McKay:** But if you have 24, you avoid all that problem.

**The Chair:** Not really, because you'll have the same problem: is it exactly 24, is it two hours out, is it two minutes out? It depends on where you want to draw the line. That's why I think we went with the two sleeps.

Go ahead, Massimo.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** I think the problem with this is technology—the fact that we can send in a motion by e-mail and accept the reply right away. I think we should be flexible enough to be aware

that we do have an electronic mechanism in place. I don't want to be a slave to my BlackBerry and have to wake up in the middle of the night to see if there have been any notices of motion sent in the last 24 hours.

So I'm okay with the 36-hour kind of thing.

**The Chair:** Yes, so it's two sleeps, that sort of thing.

I don't know who's first here.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** I was just going to say that what happens is exactly what Massimo just described. You end up with somebody saying, "I didn't get the motion, it came to me last night, I didn't see it." The extra time really is what that's about.

I mean, you guys drew up the Kelowna accord on the back of a napkin, I understand, so certainly a motion happening here at finance committee could be worked through.

**The Chair:** Ted.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** I think that's a valuable comment. We all have a lot of different things on our minds, and to make sure that we don't miss a notice of a motion, and also to make sure that it's treated with respect.... We may have to call in witnesses, and 48 hours is a short enough time to bring in a witness, let alone any shorter time.

The other committees are running 48 hours, and I'd like to see us stay consistent with that.

**The Chair:** Okay.

What I'm hearing is flexibility on 48 hours, but are there comments or questions on that?

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Call it 48, but it's actually 36.

**The Chair:** Yes, well, that's what we're saying—that it's the two-sleep rule. It gives a respect for—

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Could we change it to 36?

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Pardon me?

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** I'm saying 36 is plenty.

**The Chair:** Do you mean 36 hours?

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** A 48-hour notice would be required 36 hours in advance. That's what we're saying.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** That's...what we're saying. It would be the same sort of thing.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Are we okay in terms of the Standing Orders? Elizabeth, are we okay for the Standing Orders? Could we change them? Can we do whatever we want?

**The Chair:** My only caution with the 36 is you're running into the same thing; you've put a deadline. Surely we can say two sleeps, those being the two days, so...yes, 45 hours.

Let's entertain a motion one way or the other on this, and then we will—

Go ahead with your comments.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Chairman, I move that, instead of 48, we write 45. That would give us the interval of a committee meeting and the two sleeps that you brought up in your skilful argument. I think that will do it.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay. All in favour of this....

Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Mr. Chairman, allow me to comment on this subject. The 40 hours will be problematic when the committee finishes at around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday evening and starts again at around 11:00 a.m. on Thursday morning. I think that the idea of 36 hours is more reasonable than that of 40 hours. Those 40 hours will cause problems.

[English]

**The Chair:** You see, then you'd get a notice at 3 a.m. of 36 hours. We're trying to avoid strict hours with, hopefully, the flexibility to say two days. I mean, that's what you're asking for—two sleeps, so that it's not the next day, but the day after.

Go ahead, Paul.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** If I had to vote on this, I would vote against 45 hours and in favour of 36 hours. That seems to address the condition I had established at the outset, that a motion be admissible on Thursday afternoon if we have had a meeting on Tuesday afternoon. The 36 hours makes this possible.

[English]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mike.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** I think I'd actually moved the 48 hours originally, Mr. Chair, but—

**The Chair:** You could have. Maybe he did—did he? I'm sorry. Then we'll take that—

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** My point is that, not on this committee—I think we've worked pretty well on this committee—but on another committee, I moved a motion at the previous meeting I was at, and then we got it translated. At the meeting the francophone members were in favour of it; then, when they saw it translated, they weren't. It does take time to get things translated.

For the proper operation of government in general, I don't see why we're not required to bring the motion forward at one committee prior, so that if you're at the committee today and you want to do something on Thursday, you have to present it during this committee time period. That's why I think the 48 hours is reasonable. I actually think it's reasonable to require the notice to be on the table at the committee before it gets debated, so that we have 48 hours or a full committee period of time between two committees—

**The Chair:** Maybe that's the way around the hour clock. This is what Elizabeth just said to me. She said that if a motion has to be presented at a committee meeting, then it's the next committee meeting that would be the time to deal with it, whether it's 36 hours or 48.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** That would make sense to me.

**The Chair:** Does that make sense?

We have a motion on the floor for 48 hours. We'll deal with that one first.

**A voice:** It wasn't moved; it was amended.

**The Chair:** It wasn't moved; I accepted it as the motion, forgetting that he did one there. It doesn't matter.

On the 48 hours, all in favour please indicate.

(Motion negated)

**The Chair:** The floor can entertain another motion. Is that the 45?

He was first, unless he wants to change it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** I maintain my amendment, which proposes 45 hours.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, that's for 45 hours.

(Motion negated)

**The Chair:** *Trente-six*. All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Next is staff attendance at in camera meetings.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** I would like to change "be allowed to have one staff member" to "be allowed to have his or her staff present at an *in camera* meeting." Each member might need a researcher and an assistant. I do not want us to be limited to one employee per member. If there was a limit of two people per member, that would be all right.

● (1615)

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, we'll open the floor. He's saying that he wants not one but two motions.

For debate, go ahead, Massimo.

[Translation]

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** I would have moved that there be one person per whip office or party, but not two.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Chairman, for obvious reasons, I am going to support the Bloc's motion. If we were restricted to one person per member, the NDP would be entitled to only one person in total, when we might need a variety of skills. I support the motion for two people; that will be enough for me under any circumstance.

[English]

**The Chair:** Actually it would be the same as what Massimo just said for you guys.

Are we saying two?

Does anyone want to speak to this?

Go ahead.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** I understand that dilemma faced by some. One of the ways we could deal with this is to say if we each have two people in here—potentially we're going to own half the seats in the place, right? It does get a little bit onerous here. I wonder if—to solve Mr. Mulcair's issue with respect to having two folks based on the fact that it works for him—the other way to do this is to make sure that you could have staff and/or a person from the party so you can cover off a researcher. You can cover off somebody from the leader's office. That is an and/or rather than a situation in which you have two members each way.

I think 24 people in here watching us do our work—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Chairman, I have no problem with that.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, go ahead, Thierry.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** I want to be sure that I have properly understood Rick's motion. I believe that Massimo was talking about one staff person per member, plus one per party.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** Exactly.

**The Chair:** Okay, that looks like a consensus. Are we good with that? I hear that as a recommendation, and Rick, if you make that as a motion, number ten should be done.

Okay, that takes care of routine procedures.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Mr. Chair, it's easy for the NDP. They'll be allowed two people, but the Conservatives and the Liberals will be allowed how many people?

**The Chair:** Two, one for an individual plus one from the party. That's what you recommended—

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** That's fine. I just wanted to clarify.

**The Chair:** Now we go in camera.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** If I can propose an additional motion—I don't know if we need a motion as this is just part of the routine motions. I don't know if we have to write it, but we usually indicate it—seeing as the finance committee is one of the major committees on the Hill, when possible that we be able to be on camera and be televised.

**The Chair:** I think that is assumed. I don't think you need it here, but anybody can request that it be on camera and assume that it's going to be.

Can we obtain a motion to go in camera?

**A voice:** I so move.

**The Chair:** We will break for a couple of minutes to clear the room and go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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