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Thursday, February 4, 2016

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•(0855)

[*Translation*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean-François Lafleur): Good morning, honourable members of the committee.

I see a quorum.

[*English*]

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

We can now proceed to the election of chair, pursuant to standing order 106(2). The chair must be a member of the government party. I am now ready to receive motions for chair, please.

Mr. Maguire.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Clerk. I'm prepared to make a motion. I nominate Ms. Fry as the chair of the committee.

The Clerk: Thank you.

It has been moved by Mr. Maguire that Ms. Fry be elected as chair of the committee. Are there any further motions?

Seeing none, is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Ms. Fry duly elected chair of the committee. Congratulations.

I invite Ms. Fry to take the chair, please.

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): Thank you very much, everyone, for unanimously agreeing to make me chair. I hope I don't let you down, and I hope that this is going to be a committee in which we all work together in a collegial manner to try to achieve the best for Canadians.

I would like to move now to election of the vice-chairs.

Does the committee agree to proceed to that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Are there any nominations for vice-chair? The vice-chair must be from the official opposition.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): I would like to nominate Larry Maguire as vice-chair.

The Chair: Larry Maguire is nominated.

The Clerk: Larry Maguire has been nominated to be elected first vice-chair of the committee. I'd like to remind you that the first vice-chair has to be a member of the official opposition.

Ms. Dabrusin moved that Mr. Maguire be elected first vice-chair of the committee. Are there any further motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Maguire duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

As agreed earlier, we can move to the election of the second vice-chair.

Pursuant to standing order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition. I am now ready to receive nominations.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Thank you.

I would like to nominate Pierre Nantel for the position of second vice-chair.

[*English*]

The Clerk: Thank you.

It has been moved by Mr. Van Loan that Mr. Nantel be elected as the second vice-chair of the committee.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Nantel duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

The Chair: Now I'm hoping that the committee will agree to go to routine motions. Is that okay with the committee?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Ms. Dabrusin.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I was going to bring in the first routine motion. Are we on that?

•(0900)

The Chair: The first motion is going to be with regard to the services of the analysts from the Library of Parliament. Go ahead, Ms. Dabrusin.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I would like to move:

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

The Chair: There's a motion with regard to employing one or more analysts to assist the committee.

Does anyone want to discuss that? Is everyone in agreement? Yes, obviously.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We're now going to move to a motion on the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure. You should know that the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure is composed of five members—the chair, the two vice-chairs, and two government members—and the quorum for the subcommittee is to be three members, including one member of the government and one member of the opposition. That's basically what happens when we decide on this.

Is there anyone who wishes to move this motion?

Mr. Nantel.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Thank, you, Madam Chair.

First of all, congratulations on your election. I am very pleased to be working with you again.

I imagine that everyone received this information booklet.

[English]

I'll speak slowly to make sure that you have time to put on your earpiece.

In this information piece, it has been evoked that in the 41st Parliament all parties were represented on the subcommittee and, of course, the chair was there too. If there was any big event, the government still had the torque to make the changes it wished.

I would see it as symbolically preferable to have one government member and one representative of both opposition parties. I don't see the need to have two government members on the subcommittee.

Are there any opinions about this?

The Chair: This is traditional and it is what other committees have agreed to. It would seem to balance out the decision-making process. I would suggest that we stay with this model.

Is there any discussion? Is it agreed or not?

Mr. Van Loan.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I personally have no objection to Monsieur Nantel's suggestion. Obviously it would have to be made in the form of a motion. I think we could live with that, or the proposed one here. From the Conservative side, I think either one is probably fine.

The Chair: Mr. Vandal.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): I'm not supportive of that. I think it's important that this committee be

reflective of Parliament as a whole and as it was elected several months ago.

I'm not supportive of

[Translation]

Mr. Nantel's motion. In fact, I should call it a suggestion, since it's not even a motion yet.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Nantel.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I can present my suggestion as a motion, if you prefer, Mr. Vandal. But goodness knows how much the Conservative government enjoyed asserting its power and majority last year. We were all well aware of that. We dealt with the situation and we did what we had to to get work done, despite it.

I'm just a bit surprised by that choice. No matter what, you're not at all at risk of losing an important decision, since the clerk can swing the vote in your party's favour if there's ever a panic. If that's how you see it, fine. I can bring forward a motion but I don't think that will change anything. I won't waste the committee's time. We have important business to tend to. The media are moving around us, and we need to work quickly.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nantel.

Everyone, if you understand and you've read the new guidelines for what other committees have been doing, there is a parliamentary secretary on the steering committee. How does everyone feel about that?

As you know, parliamentary secretaries are not going to be voting on any of these committees.

Mr. Vandal.

● (0905)

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Vandal: I'd like to move a motion.

[English]

I move:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be composed of five (5) members, including the Chair, the two Vice-Chairs, two Government Members and; that the quorum of the Subcommittee consist of at least three (3) members, including one (1) member of the government and one member of the opposition; that each member of the Subcommittee be permitted to have one assistant attend any meeting of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure; and that, in addition, each party be permitted to have one staff member of a House Officer attend any meeting.

That is my motion, Madam Chair.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Do we have a copy of that? It's not the same as right here.

The Chair: I think different copies are being circulated, yes.

In this new document, there is no mention of parliamentary secretaries. That was in the older document. We're dealing with this new document now.

[Translation]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: We are in favour of the proposed motion.
[English]

The Chair : Sorry, Mr. Van Loan, but Mr. Nantel was in line, and then it will be you.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Van Loan, I would be happy if you considered that it would be nice to make sure that the quorum includes both opposition parties.

[Translation]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I think it's a reasonable idea. But, if it becomes difficult to obtain a quorum, we don't want one party having veto power. That's a problem.

[English]

I suppose we could always return to the rules if that became a persistent problem, but I don't have a problem with that if you wanted to propose it as an amendment. I would support it.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Madam Chair?

The Chair : Yes, Mr. Vandal.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I think it's important. A quorum is usually the majority, and the majority of five is three. There may be instances when things have to occur very quickly because of travel and the fact that there's only one member of the third party. We need to be nimble. The other two members need to be represented, so I think I'm speaking against this suggestion in order to keep things going very quickly. As I read it, that would be the preferred option.

• (0910)

The Chair : Is there any further discussion?

Mr. Van Loan.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I think there is merit in the notion that in setting an agenda, there be an ability.... There's certainly the ability of the third party to be there. I think I'd be prepared to try including them in the quorum, provided it didn't demonstrate a desire to shut down the work of the committee.

In terms of an opportunity to protect the rights of the minority, I don't think it's a bad idea.

The Chair : May I clarify, Mr. Nantel? Does that mean, then, that you're suggesting the quorum be four members?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Exactly.

The Chair : All right. Is there any further discussion?

Shall we put the vote?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: It hasn't been presented in the form of a motion yet.

The Chair : Would you like to amend the motion as it stands?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Yes. So I will move a motion so that—

[English]

The Chair : Right now it's for three members. He's moving for four members.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Would you like me to present it in the form of a motion?

[English]

The Chair : Yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Very well.

I move that we adopt a quorum consisting of four members.

[English]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Can we perhaps just vote on this motion that's been put forward by Mr. Vandal? We've had some discussion, but I'd suggest that we move toward the vote.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: It's entirely appropriate that it be voted on, but if there is an amendment proposed to that motion, which is what we have heard from Mr. Nantel, the amendment should be dealt with first.

The Chair : Monsieur Nantel.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Chair, I think Mr. Van Loan is quite familiar with the procedures.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair : Mr. Nantel, you're suggesting that there be four members to constitute a quorum.

All right, that is the amendment on the floor. May I call the vote?

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

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

The Chair : Now we will move on to the next motion, which is about the reduced quorum.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I would like to bring that motion on reduced quorum, please.

[Translation]

I would like to move the following motion:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four (4) members are present, including one (1) member of the opposition and one (1) member of the government; and that, in the case of previously scheduled meetings taking place outside the Parliamentary precinct, the Committee members in attendance shall only be required to wait for 15 minutes following the designated start of the meeting before they may proceed to hear witnesses and receive evidence, as long as a member of the government and the opposition are present.

[English]

The Chair : Shall I call the question?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I was going to say that it was adopted in the last Parliament.

The Chair : Yes, but we are now in this session, so we need to make this a new motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We now entertain the next motion, which has to do with time limits for witnesses, statements, and questioning.

Is there anyone who wishes to move this motion?

Mr. Vandal.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I will move on the time limits for witness statements and questioning:

That the witnesses from any one organization shall be allowed ten (10) minutes to make their opening statement. During the questioning of witnesses, there shall be six (6) minutes allocated for the first round. The order of questions for the first round of questioning shall be as follows: Conservative, Liberal, NDP, Liberal. For the questioning during the second round, six (6) minutes shall be allocated to each questioner and shall be as follows: Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, to the exception of the NDP questioning after for three minutes.

There would therefore be a total of 50 minutes of question time.

That is my motion, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Nantel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Frankly, I find that attitude pretty harsh. I'm very surprised. This is quite a turnaround from the sunny ways promised. Everyone's familiar with the schedule and knows that my time to speak is at the very end. Everyone also knows that the last questions very often aren't asked. As an NDP member, not only am I the last committee member to speak, but I'm also being given just three minutes. That's a complete joke. I refuse to believe that you can't do better than that. Honestly! That's terrible.

• (0915)

[*English*]

The Chair : Does anyone wish to continue with that discussion?

Mr. Van Loan.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I would observe that this issue did arise at the procedure and House affairs committee earlier, and they, having discussed it, came to an agreement on an approach they thought was essentially equivalent. They arranged for each part of round one to be seven minutes, so that two Liberals would get one more minute, the Conservative would get one more minute, and a New Democrat would get one more minute.

That all would get shaved off the second round so that the first three in the second round—Liberal, Conservative, Liberal—were five minutes instead of six minutes. The fourth Conservative was five minutes and stayed there, and for the New Democrat, the minute that was shaved off from there went up front, so they were reduced to two minutes.

That's what was agreed to at procedure and House affairs. Seeing that as balanced, we would be prepared to agree either to that or to the motion that's been made. It could be either one of those.

The Chair : Mr. Vandal.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I'm wondering if the honourable member would be comfortable with adding an extra minute for the New Democratic Party in the second round.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: The idea of what was done at procedure and House affairs was basically to keep the balance identical, which

meant shifting some time from the back end to the front end and not actually allocating additional time to any particular party, thus keeping the numerically fair balance.

The Chair : Monsieur Nantel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you, Ms. Fry.

I'd like to draw your attention to the decision the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs came to. Witnesses are given 10 minutes for their opening statements. A moment ago, Mr. Van Loan mentioned the 7 minutes, which are entirely appropriate.

I'm going to read what was decided in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs:

...in round one, all slots would be seven-minute slots, with the order being Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Liberal; in round two, the first four slots would all be five-minute slots, and the order would be Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Liberal; the fifth slot would remain a three-minute slot, and it would be [a poor] NDP slot.

That method has an advantage. If it's a member of the government party who speaks first during the second round of questioning, they could run out of steam. You may not realize this, but asking witnesses relevant questions is quite demanding. Very often, you're almost out of breath when you're trying to wrap up your questions. If, at the very least, we were to alternate with the other side by giving the Conservatives the first opportunity to speak, that would help. As things already stand, the NDP carries little sway when it comes to votes, and I can only lament that fact. But you will see that we have much to contribute to discussions on Canadian heritage issues.

I'd like to suggest something to you, Mr. Van Loan, or you, Mr. Vandal.

I see a problem with the Liberals still going first in the second round. A witness appears before the committee and spends 10 minutes telling their story. Then they are questioned by members in the following order: Conservative, Liberal, NDP and Liberal. And then it starts over again with a member of the government party. That doesn't strike me as a constructive exchange.

[*English*]

The Chair : Thank you, Mr. Nantel.

There is a suggestion by Mr. Vandal that he agrees with Mr. Van Loan's suggestion that we follow what the procedure and House affairs committee did, but that we add one extra minute for the NDP, which would give the NDP three minutes. Let us consider that amendment or that idea first and see how that goes.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Just as a matter of clarification, it's our understanding that in fact three minutes was accorded at PROC to the NDP in the last round, not two.

The Chair : Yes.

Shall we entertain a vote on this?

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

The Chair: Now we move to the distribution of documents, if someone wishes to move this motion.

Yes, Mr. Nantel.

• (0920)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: My apologies for interrupting. Would it be possible for the clerk to tell us the outcome of this conversation? It's a bit confusing and I'm having a hard time following.

[*English*]

The Chair : If you like, I could clarify, Mr. Nantel.

It will be 10 minutes for witnesses to make their opening statement. Then the round would be Conservative, seven minutes; Liberal, seven minutes; NDP, seven minutes; Liberal, seven minutes. Then the second round would be Liberal, five minutes; Conservative, five minutes; Liberal, five minutes; Conservative, five minutes; and NDP, three minutes.

That is what we have passed right now.

We're moving to the distribution of documents. Is there a motion?

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madame Chair, I'd like to move the next motion on the distribution of documents.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I want to correct this.

At the procedure and House affairs committee, there was a change in the rotation, as Mr. Nantel had suggested, and that is what I thought I was voting for. At the procedure and House affairs committee, the second round went Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, NDP.

The Chair : I see.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I thought we were voting for what procedure and House affairs did.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Just to clarify, the rotation that was adopted by PROC, as I understand it, was that the first round was Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Liberal, and the second round was Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, NDP.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Correct.

The Chair : Yes, I think that's what Mr. Van Loan said.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Is it agreed that's what we voted on?

The Chair : No, I don't think that was what we voted on. We did not vote on the change in the second round. We only voted on the second round moving to five minutes and the NDP having three minutes.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: We believed we were voting on the full PROC package.

The Chair : All right, but that was not the motion that was put out there. We weren't voting on the full PROC package.

It is my understanding now that the Conservatives thought that they were voting on the full PROC package, so let us now go back and vote on the full PROC package.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: That was our understanding as well.

The Chair : All right. Shall we agree, then to rescind the earlier motion and then to vote on the full PROC package?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

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

The Chair: Next is distribution of documents.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Yes, Madam Chair. I move—

That only the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the Committee and only when the documents are available in both official languages and that witnesses be advised accordingly.

[*English*]

The Chair : Is there any further discussion on this issue?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now we move to working meals. Would someone like to move that?

Ms. Dabrusin.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I'd like to bring a motion for working meals. 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.

The Chair : Is there any discussion on that motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now we move to witnesses' expenses. Would anyone like to move that motion?

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): I move:

That, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses, not exceeding two (2) representatives per organization; and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

The Chair : Is there any further discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Would someone entertain the next motion and move it forward?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I'll bring it.

The Chair : It is about staff at in camera meetings.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I would like to move:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to have one staff member present from their office and from their party at in camera meetings.

The Chair : Is there any discussion?

Mr. Van Loan.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I have a question, not having been on one of these committees for a while.

What does it actually mean when you say “one staff member present from their office and from their party”? Does that mean one staff member per member, or does that mean two staff members per member? To me, the wording is ambiguous.

The Chair : It is ambiguous, indeed, Mr. Van Loan.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: It would be one staff member per MP, plus a representative from the whip's office.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: It's “plus”. Okay. Perhaps we could make that clearer.

The Chair : Yes. Could you try to make that clearer in your motion, please?

• (0925)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: The motion would be that unless otherwise ordered, each committee member would be allowed to have one staff member present from their office and that a representative from the whip's office would also be present.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Why don't we say, “...and that each party be authorized one additional representative from the whip's office”?

The Chair : Yes. Is everyone clear? The motion, as amended, reads:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to have one staff member present from their office and a representative from the whip's office at *in camera* meetings.

I'm going to call the vote.

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

The Chair: The next motion is on transcripts of in camera meetings. Does anyone wish to move this?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): I move—

That one copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the Committee Clerk's office for consultation by members of the Committee or by their staff.

[*English*]

The Chair : Is there any discussion on this?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Finally, there's the notice of motion. I'll entertain a motion to that effect.

Mr. O'Regan.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: I move:

That forty-eight (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; that the notice of motion be filed and distributed to members by the Clerk in both official languages; and that completed motions that are received by 4:00 p.m. be distributed to members the same day.

The Chair : Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: That ends the routine motions.

I would like to thank the committee for getting that done with dispatch and for being very collegial about it.

Before I entertain a motion to adjourn, I would like to suggest that this committee meet again when we come back from the break holiday, and that we sit down and make it our first order of business to discuss where the whole committee—not just the special steering committee—wants to go, how we see ourselves mapping out the next set of meetings, and what our priorities are. I think that might be a good idea, so perhaps you can be ready to do that.

Is everyone in agreement with this proposal?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Chair, would you like us to nominate two members of the government party for the subcommittee? We would be ready to do so now.

[*English*]

The Chair : Yes, Mr. Samson.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson: I'll nominate one person and someone else can nominate the other.

I nominate Seamus O'Regan, from the Liberal Party, as a member of the subcommittee.

[*English*]

The Chair : Is everyone in agreement with that? That's from the government.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: What about the other person?

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Chair, I propose Mr. Darrell Samson to represent the government on the steering committee.

The Chair : Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Then these are the two members from the government side: Mr. Darrell Sampson and Mr. Seamus O'Regan.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Thank you.

The Chair : Now I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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