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• (0855)

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Marie-France Lafleur): Good morning, everyone.

Honourable members of the committee, I see quorum. I must inform committee 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, entertain points of order or participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party.

I'm now ready to receive motions for the chair.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): I nominate Salma Zahid.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Regan that Madam Zahid be the 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: Mrs. Salma Zahid is duly elected chair of the committee.

Congratulations.

The Chair (Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone.

Thanks a lot for your trust. I really look forward to working with you all in the 43rd Parliament. I hope we will do amazing work on this committee. I've been on this committee in the last Parliament also, and we have done some important work. I look forward to working with you all, making sure we can proceed with the work of the committee.

Thank you.

The next item on the agenda is the election of the vice-chairs. I know that PROC is looking into the number of vice-chairs and that that issue is being taken up there. They have not landed on a decision. I think they will agree on that this week, so if it's okay with everyone, I propose that we postpone the election of the vice-chairs until our next meeting. Is everyone okay with that?

Yes, go ahead please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): It's good to have francophones around the table. It provides an opportunity to practise speaking French and to put the interpreters to work.

[*English*]

The Chair: Sorry.

Yes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Chair, first I would like to congratulate you on your election.

Other committees that have met in recent weeks have moved motions to elect the first vice-chair and the second vice-chair. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is discussing the election of the third vice-chair.

If we have consent, we could proceed immediately with the election of the first vice-chair and the second vice-chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Thank you, Chair. Congratulations on your selection today. I look forward to a productive few months ahead.

I agree with my colleague that, while the discussions are continuing at PROC with regard to the fourth party and the vice-chair, we should proceed to the appointment of the first and second vice-chairs and agree to review this again and reconsider it when PROC has come to a final decision.

The Chair: Are there any further comments?

Yes, Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I sat on another committee that proceeded as a result of a motion in the House for the health committee to have a briefing on the coronavirus issue. So it proceeded and went ahead before all of the PROC discussions were under way. If indeed the understanding, then, is for PROC to complete its discussion on the number of vice-chairs, I would prefer that we hold off until next week. My understanding is that we will sit this week, today, and likely will not have a committee meeting on Thursday, if I'm correct. Then the following week we will resume. Presumably by then PROC would have completed—one would hope—its discussion, in which case, we would be well positioned to complete the vice-chair elections.

● (0900)

The Chair: Are there further comments?

Yes, Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: I'd like to hear from the government side.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): I support what Ms. Kwan said. There is no rush. We are going to elect a vice-chair. It doesn't really matter; it's going to be the opposition. But if PROC has not fully settled on certain decisions they are making, it's fine if we just wait another week or so.

The Chair: Do you agree with Mr. Tabbara's suggestion?

Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: I would concur with that—reluctantly. I think it could be dealt with after PROC's decision, but I sense the feeling in the room and I think we should get off to a collegial start, because it may not last all that long. But certainly, I concur, and if I could, Madam Chair, I have a number of motions that I would like to put while we are in session now.

To the clerk, the first motion should be distributed.

The first motion is as follows:

That the Committee call upon Minister Mendicino to come before committee to speak about his mandate letter, provide a Ministerial overview and discuss his legislative plans

As the documents are being circulated, I'll just say that it is customary in every new Parliament to call the minister—or ministers—responsible to get an interpretation on their reading of their mandate letter, which in many cases has a number of general directions without specific direction.

That is my first motion, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kent.

On the motion moved by Mr. Kent, are there any comments, debate?

Hon. Geoff Regan: On a point of order, Madam Chair, is this properly before the committee at this meeting? Normally, of course, we'd deal with the routine motions, and the election of chair is on the agenda. I just want to clarify whether this is.

I see the clerk nodding.

The Chair: We normally do routine motions, but there is nothing preventing a member from moving a motion. It is now on the floor, and we can have a debate on it.

Mr. Tabbara.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: I don't think the government has an issue with having the minister here. We'll check his availability, and as soon as he is available we can invite him here to the committee for a one-hour meeting, along with his officials. But I think right now we just want to move the routine motions.

Do we have to deal with this motion first?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Is there no more debate?

We can move to the vote.

Hon. Peter Kent: I'd like a recorded vote.

The Chair: It will be a recorded vote on the motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The clerk and I will work it out with the minister's office, and we will come up with a date.

Next on the list is Mr. Tabbara.

● (0905)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Thank you, Madam Chair, and congratulations again on your appointment. We look forward to having great discussions with you and your helping us to be collegial at this committee, helping us keep order and present great topics of discussion that many Canadians want to see.

That being said, I want to move some routine motions. I want everyone to go lightly on me. I'm going to try to speak some small paragraphs in French, so please excuse me.

The first motions is under “Analysts”.

[*Translation*]

The motion is as follows:

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 it in its work.

[*English*]

Regarding the subcommittee on agenda and procedure, I move:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five (5) members—

Pardon?

The Chair: Excuse me. Mr. Tabbara, you have to move one motion at a time.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Tabbara has moved a motion, so we will debate it.

Go ahead, Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: We enthusiastically concur. The value of the analysts to our work is essential.

I think this will be another unanimous vote.

The Chair: Thank you.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Tabbara.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: I have another motion, this time on the subcommittee on agenda and procedure:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five (5) members; the Chair, one Member from each Party; and that the subcommittee work in the spirit of collaboration.

The Chair: Is there any debate on it?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: On reduced quorum, I move:

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 member of the opposition and one member of the government, but when travelling outside the parliamentary precinct, that the meeting begin after fifteen (15) minutes, regardless of members present.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and congratulations on being elected to the chair position.

On this reduced quorum motion, I'd like to propose a friendly amendment if I may. Instead of having one member from the opposition, could I propose that we have two members from the opposition and two members from the government side in the event of reduced quorum? I think this would be in the spirit of reflecting the minority government situation that we have today. Because we have three opposition parties on this side, it would enhance the numbers, increasing them by one.

The Chair: Do you have an amendment, Mr. Serré?

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Congratulations, Madam Chair.

I agree that there should be two government members and two opposition members. Given the number of people here, this works well.

[English]

The Chair: All those in favour of the amendment proposed by Ms. Kwan?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All those in favour of the motion as amended?

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

The Chair: Mr. Tabbara.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: On the questioning of witnesses, I move:

That witnesses be given ten (10) minutes for their opening statement; that at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of the witnesses, there be allocated six (6) minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows: Round one:

● (0910)

[Translation]

Conservative Party

Liberal Party

Bloc Québécois

New Democratic Party

For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows:

Conservative Party, five minutes,

Liberal Party, five minutes,

Conservative Party, five minutes,

Liberal Party, five minutes,

Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes,

New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes.

[English]

The Chair: All those in favour?

Yes, Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I'm going to make a suggestion and wonder whether committee members have an interest in entertaining this.

Previously at this committee, when we had witnesses, instead of a 10-minute presentation by them, we had seven-minute presentations. Our rotation then was such that we would have seven minutes for the first round of questions and would then go to five minutes and then, in fact, I think, to three minutes. If time were available in the last round, instead of being two and a half minutes, it could be three minutes. I'd like to see whether there is any interest in looking at adjusting this.

I recognize that the proposed 10 minutes came from the procedure and House affairs committee and from negotiations and so on, there, but that too was the case in the last Parliament. However, this committee chose to do something a little different. We found that when we had witnesses presenting—and we often have quite a number of witnesses—we could get into a situation where the presentations consumed a lot of time, and therefore questioning by the committee was severely reduced.

I would like to test the floor to see whether there is interest in reducing the presentations by witnesses from 10 minutes to seven minutes, and then going to a round of questioning of seven minutes in the first round, five minutes in the second round, and then three minutes instead of two and a half in the last round.

The Chair: We have a list.

Mr. Kent is first.

Hon. Peter Kent: I appreciate my colleague's suggestion, but, for example, when the minister comes for only an hour, looking at the allocation of times now, the addition of the four extra minutes in the first round would make it difficult for the New Democratic Party to get in its second-round questions.

Given the dynamics of the four parties and the breakdown that PROC has suggested, I think that as the best way to ensure that all parties get their full representation in a single hour—the first and second rounds—the timing offered by PROC is probably more appropriate.

The Chair: Mr. Serré is on the list.

Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: I appreciate the suggestion.

I agree with Mr. Kent, in the sense that we should leave the 10 minutes there.

We have a generous separation with the four parties. If there are additional witnesses—and this has been approved by PROC—say, three or four witnesses, maybe the discretion of the chair could be utilized at that meeting itself. However, what would be adopted as approved is the 10 minutes.

The Chair: Madam Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you.

If we reduce the minutes for the presenters to seven minutes, you save three minutes. That three minutes could then be added to the questioning component. I table that to test the floor to see if people are interested in doing it.

I am cognizant that as committees get going you have a number of different witnesses, and so seven minutes per witness would help allow for additional time for questioning.

• (0915)

The Chair: Ms. Martinez Ferrada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): I appreciate Ms. Kwan's comments.

This is my first time sitting on a committee. Personally, I would have some difficulty taking time away from witnesses who come here to talk to us. I think that we should give them all the time they need to express their opinions and give their presentations. I would have some difficulty taking time away from people who have access to parliamentarians and giving that time to members of Parliament. We often see each other outside meetings. I can understand the idea, but I would have a great deal of difficulty taking time away from witnesses who appear before the committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Kwan, perhaps you can clarify whether that was an amendment being moved or just discussion.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I wasn't moving an amendment, Madam Chair. I was testing the floor just to see where people lie.

Just as a final response, I appreciate that when witnesses come before us, we want to hear from them. It's equally important to allow sufficient time for the witnesses to answer questions from committee members. This is not meant to take away time from committee members, but rather to facilitate dialogue with witnesses.

The Chair: Mr. Seeback.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): I don't think it's appropriate to take time away from witnesses. Some come great distances to express what they want to say. I just don't think it's appropriate to limit them to seven minutes.

The Chair: Seeing no further debate, all those in favour of the motion proposed by Mr. Tabbara?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Tabbara.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: The next motion I will move is with regard to documents distribution:

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

The Chair: Agreed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Tabbara.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: I'll move the next motion in French. Sorry if I butcher it.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: You have to try, right? You have to try.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: This is very often the most sensitive motion that comes before a committee. Given our early morning start, I think it would be appropriate to have the scaled-down breakfast. I know that on the last committee I served, there was a discussion between those who stressed healthy food and those who liked bacon.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. Peter Kent: I would leave it to the mood of the room, but I think some sustenance with protein, and coffee, tea and juice, would be appropriate.

The Chair: Mr. Seeback.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: I was just going to raise a point of order: Bacon is not healthy? I object.

Voices: Oh, oh!

A voice: [*Inaudible—Editor*] the pork producers.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: I have pork producers in my riding.

The Chair: Ms. Dhillon.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): It's very important that we have healthy food. Pastas and fried things are not good for us.

The Chair: You're not proposing pastas in the morning.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: No, I'm just giving an example.

A voice: Oatmeal.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Yes, something like that.

A voice: Fruit would be great.

A voice: Oatmeal and bacon.

The Chair: We will work something out and make sure that we have some healthy choices. We'll work on that with the clerk and make sure that everyone's needs are looked after.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Regarding witnesses, I move:

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

The Chair: All those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

• (0920)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Regarding staff at in camera meetings, I move:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each Committee member be allowed to have one staff member at an in camera meeting and that one additional person from each House officer's office be allowed to be present.

The Chair: All those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Regarding in camera meeting transcripts, 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.

The Chair: All those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: The motion on notices of motions is a longer one—

The Chair: One second, Mr. Tabbara.

Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

With respect to in camera proceedings, I'd like to move the following motion:

That any motion to go in camera should be debatable and amendable, and that the committee may only meet in camera for the following purposes:

- (a) to discuss administrative matters of the committee
- (b) a draft report
- (c) briefings concerning national security;

And furthermore, minutes of in camera meetings should reflect on the result of all votes taken by the committee while in camera, including how each member voted when a recorded vote is requested.

This is just to further clarify the content of in camera meetings. Again, at another committee this was adopted. It's so that we will all know, as we head into in camera meetings, what their content would be.

The Chair: Mr. Regan.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Chair, would it be possible to add to this motion a sentence stating that we can sit in camera when the matter concerns an individual's private information?

[*English*]

The Chair: So you are proposing an amendment to....

Hon. Geoff Regan: If you're going to have a motion like this, it seems to me you ought to have a provision so that if you have the

private information of someone you're dealing with for some reason, you ought to be able to go in camera for that.

The Chair: Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: I agree with both of my colleagues. If there is nothing in precedents that would block that, I think there would be some circumstances where a brief in camera discussion of protection of privacy or security information would allow...and then come out and vote on whether or not the substantive part of the meeting be held in camera.

The Chair: Mr. Regan, can you please clarify the amendment you're proposing?

Hon. Geoff Regan: You're looking for wording.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. Geoff Regan: I think I would have to see the wording of the motion itself to figure out where I need to amend it. It's really to protect personal confidential information. I don't have wording. I will have it in a moment; I'm drafting it on the fly.

Madam Chair, just to clarify, the motion provides for three circumstances in which the committee can meet in camera: (a) to discuss administrative matters of the committee, (b) a draft report, and (c) briefings concerning national security.

I move that following the word "security", we add the following: "and (d) to discuss matters involving an individual's private information."

Would that work?

The Chair: Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I think I'm okay with that amendment. I'm trying to think of an example where that would occur. I wonder whether Mr. Regan could provide an example so we can conceptualize the content in reference to the amendment.

• (0925)

Hon. Geoff Regan: I think we can imagine that when we speak about consular issues, there are times when there are matters that ought not to be disclosed publicly in the interest of the people we're dealing with.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Are there any further comments?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I'm fine with that, Madam speaker. In a way I guess that could potentially also fall into the national security component. When I say "national security", I mean it in the broadest sense in that context, but I'm fine with that further clarification.

The Chair: Madam Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): I just want to make sure that the next part makes sense. Could you reread the preamble and paragraph (d) together?

[*English*]

The Chair: Would you like to read the motion?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I would like you to read the preamble and paragraph (d) so that we can check for consistency.

[*English*]

The Chair: The motion as proposed by Ms. Kwan reads as follows:

That any motion to go in camera should be debatable and amendable, and that the committee may only meet in camera for the following purposes:

- (a) to discuss administrative matters of the committee
- (b) a draft report
- (c) briefings concerning national security;

The amendment proposed by Mr. Regan would add:
and (d) to discuss matters involving an individual's private information.

The motion would then continue as was:

Furthermore, minutes of in camera meeting should reflect on the results of all votes taken by the committee while in camera, including how each member voted when a recorded vote is requested.

All those in favour of the amendment proposed by Mr. Regan?

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

Mr. Tabbara.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: On notice of motions, I move:

That a forty-eight (48) hours notice, interpreted as two (2) nights, shall be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the Committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, provided that (1) the notice be filed with the Clerk of the Committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; that (2) the motion be distributed to Members in both official languages by the Clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour; and that (3) notices received after the deadline hour or on a non-business days be deemed to have been received during the next business day and that when the committee is travelling on official business, no substantive motions may be moved

The Chair: All those in favour.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As I said, I have three other motions that I would like to propose.

The first of these reads:

That the Committee begin a study on the impacts of the unfair delays in processing times for irregular border crossers on the minister's resources, the applicants that are applying through traditional methods and the irregular crossers themselves

Again, I think this is an issue that is front of mind, certainly for parliamentarians but also for our constituents across the country, particularly in those communities on whom the burden of support falls most heavily during long processing delays.

I'm sure this will be of importance and would have municipalities, regional governments and provincial governments following it with great interest.

The Chair: Is there any debate on this?

Madam Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

In terms of studies, I suspect that we have a variety of different studies that we would like to entertain. My understanding of the purpose of this meeting today was to deal with routine proceedings, but now we're heading into studies.

I would like to propose that perhaps studies could be considered at a subcommittee whereby we could all bring our proposed study topics to the table and then we can arrange a schedule accordingly.

● (0930)

The Chair: Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: I appreciate my colleague's response and suggestion.

However, I think it's appropriate, certainly after at least agreeing or not on study proposals today—and I have two more motions to propose—that a subcommittee could then consider the priorities for the agenda in the days, weeks and months going forward. Again, that depends on the amount of time we would want to allocate to each study.

I wish to continue to have this motion considered today, and the two other motions that I have with me as well.

The Chair: Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Can we suspend for a few minutes?

The Chair: All those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

● (0930)

(Pause)

● (0930)

The Chair: The meeting is resumed.

We were on the motion by Mr. Kent.

Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: During that little break we had, I had clarification from Mr. Kent. The purpose of his motion is simply to raise the topics for discussion, as opposed to specifying the details around when to do the study and so on.

In light of that, I'm fine with supporting the motion proposing this topic.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Can I ask whether that would mean that, when the subcommittee meets, this would be among the topics discussed? I presume you'd have a broad discussion on various things, because I'm sure others will want to bring forward ideas about what we should be studying as well.

● (0935)

The Chair: Ms. Martinez Ferrada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: As I said earlier, I'm sitting on the committee for the first time. As Mr. Regan just said, a number of committee members want to move motions for discussion, and I want to ask you a few questions.

[English]

So I wonder if it's possible to give them notice today and have a subcommittee talk about prioritizing the subjects that we want to study, how long we want to study them for, and have that discussion at subcommittee.

Is that something that could be done?

The Chair: Yes.

Next is Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: To answer Mr. Regan's question, it is a proposal to commit to hold a study. The detail of the content of such a study, the length of such a study and the timing of the study would be for the subcommittee to determine on availability, but it is appropriate to bring these motions to the floor today, and I wish to bring them and have them voted on.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Normandin.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: My comments are somewhat along the same lines as Ms. Ferrada's comments. Given that the committee is always free to determine the mandates that it wishes to fulfill, I wonder whether it's a bit premature to present these proposals now, when we haven't had time to consider them or to assess their merits. At first glance, the motions seem particularly well founded. However, perhaps some advance notice of a discussion on the motions would give us the chance to amend them and maybe even clarify them. This isn't in any way a judgment on the merits of these motions.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Seeback.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Given that the election was almost four months ago and the committee is just meeting now for the first time, I think it's important that we hit the ground running and that we have substantive studies the committee can start to work forward on. I don't think the motions being brought forward are exceptionally complicated, and I think we can all agree, yes or no, if we want to study these issues.

I think these issues that are being raised are very important and that we should have some work for the committee to do right away.

The Chair: Mr. Regan.

Hon. Geoff Regan: We just adopted a motion on notices of motion requiring 48 hours' notice for any substantive motion to be considered, unless the substantive motion relates directly to the business under consideration. The business under consideration, according to the agenda of this meeting, is the election of the chair.

The Chair: We moved the committee business, so anything can be moved.

Hon. Geoff Regan: When did we do that? I don't remember anyone saying a word—

The Chair: It was right after the election of the chair, before the routine motions were presented.

Ms. Martinez Ferrada.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: The process may seem a little complicated, but I think that, in the spirit of collaboration, we can all agree to look at the issues that are really important. In that spirit of collaboration, it would be useful to take the time to read the motions and amend them, not to block them, but to make them even better.

This could be done in a committee or subcommittee.

[English]

I don't know what the word is in French, I'm sorry.

[Translation]

It's "sous-comité"? Thank you.

[English]

Let's take the time to look at it and discuss it. Let's give notice of all the motions the members want to make today and let's talk about these motions in a subcommittee and bring them back, maybe with amendments or not, and vote on them at the next meeting.

The Chair: Ms. Kwan.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I don't think that we're going to suffer as a result of a two-day extension to gather more information, or even to add content. I'm thinking, for example, of the lottery system for the family reunification program. This system isn't the only one that has been used in the past. Many other systems may be worth reviewing. This issue could be subject to a subamendment.

In my opinion, two days to reflect on these issues would benefit everyone. It wouldn't prevent us from discussing the substance of the issues. I don't intend to delay things. However, I think that everyone would benefit from a little time—I'm not talking about months—to see whether any improvements to the motions can be proposed.

• (0940)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Tabbara.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I agree with my Bloc colleague. I also want to point out that we just passed a motion to have the minister come in with his officials and discuss his mandate and discuss probably the vision of immigration and where the department wants to be in the future and the minister's vision.

I think out of that meeting we can get a good outlook on where the minister lies and his vision, the department's vision, and we can ask detailed questions about the mandate, about where we want to go. I think from there a lot of us have many motions we want to bring forward and some questions we want to have. Once we have this first official meeting with the minister, I think we should then go into a subcommittee or another committee and discuss an array of topics. I think, first and foremost, the first motion that we passed is a good way to start this committee. I think for the next motions we should discuss them all in a group.

The Chair: Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I was actually just thinking about the point that Mr. Regan had raised. That is on the passing of the routine motions. When the committee first considered the motion for the minister to come before us, that motion was raised before the routine motion on notices of motion was passed. Then since that time, we passed the motion about requiring notice of motion. Therefore one would assume, going forward with the rest of the committee, that the motions that are tabled would require sufficient notices per the routine motions that we just passed governing this committee. I'm just needing some further clarification with respect to that.

As I said, I don't have a problem having topics to be tabled at the committee, for us to entertain those topics to be included in studies for this committee. I just think we should make sure we follow the procedures that we have set out governing this committee.

The Chair: The clerk would like to clarify on Ms. Kwan's point.

The Clerk: For the information of the members of the committee, right after we elected the chair the committee went into committee business to discuss any matter, so the floor at that point was open to anything. The routine motion that was adopted says 48 hours notice "unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration". Under committee business, any motion can be moved without the 48 hours' notice because it's related to the committee business that's going on.

The Chair: Thanks for clarifying that.

Next on the list we have Mr. Seeback.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: My understanding, from the discussion we've already had today, is that we're not meeting on Thursday, and then we may or may not have the minister coming next week. I don't know. Why would we not move forward with studies, so that we can at least have the subcommittee start to look at which studies and when those studies should be brought forward? I know all of my colleagues came here to work on behalf of their constituents. Suggesting that we don't deal with matters for another few weeks, when we haven't dealt with anything in four months, to me seems like a great waste of time. These are not overly complicated motions. I think we should proceed to voting on whether we're going to move forward with these motions or not do anything for another few weeks.

The Chair: Ms. Martinez Ferrada.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Can I move an amendment to the effect that the motion be referred immediately to a subcommittee and that the subcommittee meet on Thursday?

[English]

There is nothing that prevents us to do a subcommittee meeting on Thursday and come back next week. It's just a suggestion.

Can I amend the motion to send it in to discussion to a subcommittee?

• (0945)

The Chair: Just one second.

That's outside the scope of the motion on the floor for what we are debating right now.

Next on the list is Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I was going to suggest that, in light of the fact that likely this committee won't meet on Thursday, it would make sense for the Thursday timeslot to be a subcommittee so that we can actually get on with making a schedule for the studies we will undertake for this committee.

The Chair: That will be another motion.

Right now the motion on the floor for debate is as presented by Mr. Kent, and that's what we are debating right now.

Is there any further discussion on the motion presented by Mr. Kent?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Can I ask for a vote on this motion right now? Is that possible?

Hon. Peter Kent: I'd like a recorded vote.

The Chair: Okay, we'll have a recorded vote.

(Motion negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My third motion is as follows:

That the Committee begin a study to review the failed lottery system for the family reunification program.

As the documents are presented, let me say that we have the analysts at the table now. We have their resources available to begin considering how such studies would be conducted.

With regard to the tabling of motions at this committee, which the clerk has made quite clear is appropriate to do, I don't believe the decision on motions should be made at subcommittee. A motion passed at committee can certainly be crafted, and time allocation and witnesses can be discussed at subcommittee, but I think that for the motions themselves, it's appropriate that they be considered here.

I would think that every member at this table is well aware of the priority concerns with regard to this committee's responsibilities and can certainly commit to making studies on priority issues before Canadians, with later decision-making as to the timing, length, and the witnesses as required.

The Chair: Mr. Tabbara.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: I'll speak to this motion.

Previously we talked a little bit about family reunification. Our past government did a lot of work to reduce the backlog of a previous government that had a very long backlog. Yes, we always need to look at how to improve family reunification for Canadians so that they're reuniting with their families, ensuring that they're together and work well together. We know that families who are together often succeed much more in our societies. However, I want an opportunity for other members in other committees to bring forward their motions so that we can all have a fruitful discussion—from all different parties, including ours. I want to get into the routine motions. Once we get into that, maybe we can hear other motions, but I know we have to deal with this on the floor.

That's what I have to say for now.

● (0950)

The Chair: Mr. Seeback.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: I certainly recall, in 2015, when the Liberal Party campaigned on making family reunification the centrepiece of immigration. Fast forward to 2020. Family reunification is closed—no new applicants—with no explanation and no solution being proposed at this point.

This committee is uniquely positioned to study the issue. It's an incredibly important issue—I know that. Family reunification is important for so many Canadians, and especially many new Canadians. I don't know why we would not consider studying how the lottery system didn't work. We can always be looking at what systems might be better; that can certainly be part of the study. Why we wouldn't be voting for this, I do not understand. This is a very important issue to many people in my riding, and I'm sure to those of many other members who sit at this committee, so I think we should approve this motion.

The Chair: Mr. Regan.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Just this morning we adopted a motion that says the following:

[*Translation*]

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five members; the chair, one member from each party; and that the subcommittee work in the spirit of collaboration.

[*English*]

It seems to me that we've set up something where we're asking the subcommittee to discuss what our agenda should be, what things we ought to study. Obviously, yes, decisions by that subcommittee can always be overturned, or other decisions can be made at the full committee, but we've asked that subcommittee to work in a spirit of collaboration.

It doesn't seem to me that a motion that includes a word like “failed” is really coming in the spirit of collaboration that we're talking about here. I would urge members to consider that there is a role for the subcommittee to work in that spirit and to talk about issues that are, yes, of concern to all Canadians, but I'm sure there are lots of topics this subcommittee will want to address. I look forward to working with the committee on whatever we decide to study.

The Chair: Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: As I said earlier, I agree with the substance of the motion, but it seems incomplete. When we talk about the lottery, we're specifically referring to the reunification of families, meaning parents and grandparents. There's no mention of processing times, which vary depending on the country of origin, the number of applicants and certain issues. These factors should be included in the motion.

It would be worthwhile to talk about the regular sponsorship system—spouses, common-law partners and children—and processing times. The motion could be improved in that area. If we decide to table a motion in a subcommittee, I don't think that a time frame of one week, or even two days, justifies the hasty adoption of the motion when we could improve the content.

I urge the committee to vote against the motion, not based on the substance, but on how it's being moved.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Serré.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Chair, I move that the debate be adjourned.

[*English*]

The Chair: May the debate now be adjourned?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: I'd like to move the following motion on independent members and clause-by-clause at committee:

That, in relation to Orders of Reference from the House respecting Bills,

(a) the Clerk of the Committee shall, upon the Committee receiving such an Order of Reference, write to each Member who is not a member of the caucus represented on the Committee to invite those Members to file with the Clerk of the Committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the Bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the Committee consider;

(b) suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a) at least 48 hours prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill to which the amendments relate shall be deemed to be proposed during the said consideration, provided that the Committee may, by motion, vary this deadline in respect of a given Bill; and

(c) during the clause-by-clause consideration of a Bill, the Chair shall allow a Member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

● (0955)

The Chair: Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: I won't speak to that motion. That's fine.

The Chair: All those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you, Chair.

I think the adjournment of the debate on the previous motion has set an unfortunate precedent, but I would like to table my fourth motion today, please, for circulation:

That the Committee begin a comparative study to review any differential in acceptance rates of visitor visas and spousal sponsorships by country of origin of the application.

Again, to my colleague from the Bloc, these motions are made for studies of a general topic. Again, the specifics of how a study would be conducted would, on the one hand, be on the advice of the analysts; secondly, on the input of the individual members of the committee; and again in consideration of witnesses dealing with the different regions of our country who sometimes see these issues in very different lights.

Again, this is an appropriate motion, as the clerk has said, just as the others were as well. I would hope that we would at least have a vote on this motion as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Tabbara.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: I want to get some clarification on this motion, just for my personal clarification.

Mr. Kent, would you be looking at comparisons between certain countries that have higher acceptance rates?

I'm just going to throw out some examples—for example, central Europe compared with Algeria—to see if the acceptance rate may be higher in one place than in the other, or look at places where there is a lot of volume; for example, India, China, the Philippines.

Hon. Peter Kent: All of that, exactly. There is a very stark difference in acceptance rates from different countries, from different regions of the world, and there are apparent reasons attached to that. Certainly there has been opinion offered from a variety of sources in recent years, and this study would explore the full spectrum of the disparity in acceptance rates.

The Chair: Mr. Seeback.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: I don't have the current facts or statistics, but when I was last here in Parliament—and I'll give you an example—the visitor visa acceptance rate in Chandigarh was around 53%, whereas the visitor visa acceptance rate in Delhi was almost 70%. That is a significant and marked departure between two different places within the same country. It would be interesting to find out what the difference is.

In my riding I have a large Punjabi population, and the very low acceptance rate of visitor visas from Chandigarh, which is in Punjab, is an issue. That is something we should look at. We should try to determine whether there could be some institutional bias that is deciding to reject visitor visas in Chandigarh as opposed to rejecting visitor visas in Delhi. That's just one small example I can think of.

That study that would be very important to a number of my constituents.

The Chair: Madam Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Unlike the first two motions, this motion seems only quantitative, whereas the first two were more qualitative. We were looking for the causes of failures or the consequences of unfair delays. I find that there's a difference between the

first two motions and this motion. In this case, I would be more comfortable supporting it.

[*English*]

The Chair: All those in favour of the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Serré.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Chair, I move that the meeting be adjourned.

• (1000)

[*English*]

The Chair: All those in favour?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, before adjournment I wonder if I can just make a comment.

The Chair: Yes, please.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much.

I appreciate that spirit of collaboration. In that light I'd like to make these comments.

I hope we're going to have a subcommittee meeting on Thursday to talk about study topics and to prepare a schedule for the work of this committee. Some of the areas I'm interested in studying, which I'd like to share with committee members, not as a motion but as topics for people to start thinking about, and how we may find ways to work collaboratively to address these topics, are as follow.

I think the issue of the caregivers program is worth studying. We have the end of the previous program and the beginning of a new program, but there are many unanswered pieces with respect to the new program. That's one area I'd like to suggest we study.

Another area that I think is worth this committee's examination is the issue of the private sponsorships of refugees. We have different approaches, for example, with the groups of five sponsorship. People with groups of five have to go through a process of ensuring that the individuals receive certification from the UNHCR, which is also a very difficult process for many of them. I think we should be looking at this issue in the privately sponsored refugee process.

Another area I'd like our committee to take a look at would be the new program the government introduced not very long ago for vulnerable workers, and particularly the impact on temporary foreign workers. There were some concerns with that process and perhaps there are areas to consider for improvements. Therefore, I think it's worthwhile for our committee to take a look at those issues.

Although the motion did not pass today, the parents-grandparents issue that's been raised is worth looking at, not just the question around the lottery system, but the entire parents-grandparents programming, including the issue of the processing time prior to the lottery system and the system that was adopted, including the qualification for people to sponsor. I'll give an example, Madam Chair.

I know of one individual where, in the three-year period when they're supposed to show the income level they have acquired, one of the family members became pregnant and went on maternity leave. As a result of that, their family income dipped for that period only. After she had her baby, she went right back to work, but because she went on maternity leave, her income disqualified that family from sponsorship after almost three years of waiting. I think we should be more flexible in our approach to something like that.

Those are the kinds of things I would like us to thoroughly review, the parents-grandparents programming, and how to ensure that we come forward with an inclusive program and achieve the goals we all want.

Madam Chair, these are some of the things I would like us to entertain as we head into subcommittee to consider areas of study.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kwan.

We have the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Seeback, you have a quick comment.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: I like everything my colleague is proposing to study. I think those are all very important things to look at, but I

want to stress that I do not think that motions for studies should be at subcommittee. They should be here at the committee because they should be openly debated and discussed by all members. I don't think we should be moving any potential study to a subcommittee of five people. I think this is the proper forum, and I don't know what the chair is going to say about that, or how we're going to proceed. Maybe we need to have that discussion.

• (1005)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Seeback.

I'll discuss it with the clerk, and we will call for a subcommittee meeting so that we can agree on the agenda for our committee business.

Now we have the motion to adjourn the meeting.

All those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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