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Standing Committee on National Defence

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Monday, February 24, 2020

Chair: Mrs. Karen McCrimmon



Standing Committee on National Defence

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• (1530)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael MacPherson): Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can receive motions only 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 am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Clerk, I would like to nominate Madam Karen McCrimmon for chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Spengemann that Karen McCrimmon be elected chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

I declare the motion carried and Karen McCrimmon duly elected chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.)): Thank you very much. It is a great honour to be here with you today.

I feel that it is very important for us to work together in order to serve Canadians.

[English]

I'd like to thank our clerk in advance. I know that these are always very challenging, very rewarding jobs.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to proceed with vice-chairs?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): For vice-chair, I'd like to nominate James Bezan from the official opposition.

The Clerk: Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

It has been moved by Ms. Cheryl Gallant that Mr. James Bezan be elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

I declare the motion carried and Mr. James Bezan duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: 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 prepared to receive motions for the second vice-chair.

Mr. Baker.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): I would like to propose Michel Boudrias as the second vice-chair.

[English]

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Baker that Mr. Boudrias be elected second vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I'd like to move that Randall Garrison be the second vice-chair of the committee.

The Clerk: Seeing that more than one candidate has been nominated, pursuant to Standing Order 106(3) I am required to preside over the election of the second vice-chair by secret ballot.

We have a motion by Ms. Gallant that Monsieur Randall Garrison be second vice-chair. It has been moved by Mr. Baker that Monsieur Michel Boudrias be elected second vice-chair.

Are there any further motions?

Before proceeding, I will briefly explain the process. My colleague, who is a procedural clerk at the House of Commons, will distribute a ballot to each member of the committee. You have to clearly indicate your choice by printing the first and last names of the candidate on the ballot and depositing it into the box. We will then count the votes and announce the name of the successful candidate. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes, another ballot will have to be conducted in the same manner.

• (1535) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1535)

The Clerk: I declare Michel Boudrias to have received the majority of the votes.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Thank you.

It's my pleasure to welcome the vice-chairs. I look forward to working together.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to now proceed to routine motions?

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Yes, please.

The Chair: Mr. Spengemann.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you, Madam Chair. My congratulations on your election.

[*English*]

It's my pleasure to take the committee through the customary routine motions. I will read them, unless there is an objection. Some of them are somewhat lengthy, but we'll just go through them one at a time.

Madam Chair, the first motion is on the analysts.

The motion is:

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.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I'd like to invite the analysts to take their places at the table, please.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Could I ask you to introduce yourselves to the committee, please?

Ms. Katherine Simonds (Committee Researcher): Good afternoon. My name is Katherine Simonds. I've assisted the House national defence committee, as well as the NATO parliamentary association, for the past few years. I am here today only to replace Martin Auger, who will be supporting the committee throughout the rest of the year.

Ms. Marie Dumont (Committee Researcher): My name is Marie Dumont. I have worked with the Library of Parliament for more than two years.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

I am very happy to work with you and also with Martin Auger.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Spengemann, would you please continue with the routine motions?

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

The second motion deals with 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.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

Mr. James Bezan: That wording at the end, "in the spirit of collaboration", is that something new that you threw in there, Sven, or has it been around for a while?

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Had it not been there I would have thrown it in, but I think it is customary.

Mr. James Bezan: In that spirit of collaboration, I guess we can accept it.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Madam Chair, the next motion is on reduced quorum:

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.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Chair, I'd like to propose an amendment that we insert the word "official" between "the" and "opposition", so that it reads "four (4) members are present, including one member of the official opposition and one member of the government".

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Is that a change from what is normally presented?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: It's been the normal practice to have a member of each opposition present in a reduced quorum, but at the very least the official opposition should be there.

Mr. James Bezan: I'd like to speak in favour of the amendment to the motion. It just ensures balance, so that there's always one government member present and one member of Her Majesty's loyal opposition present. Of course, we'd expect other opposition members to be present too.

The Chair: Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): I was also going to propose an amendment to the same section, which would say "two members from opposition parties". That would require at least two of the three parties to be present.

We have competing texts. I'm not sure how that will work in terms of trying to deal with amendments.

The Chair: Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: We have two amendments. Mine is first, then, in inserting the word "official".

Randall, you would put in another one.

The Chair: Mr. Dowdall.

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): I support this motion.

The Chair: Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Madam Chair, would it be acceptable if we said “two members of the opposition, including at least one member of the official opposition”?

Mr. Terry Dowdall: That works.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: The spirit of the motion is to allow the intake of evidence under minimal participation. If you want the full committee there, that defeats the purpose of the motion. There will be no substantive discussion. It's strictly intake of evidence, as far as I understand it, right?

The Chair: Mr. Boudrias.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): I assume that we are talking about a minimum of four members here.

The request clearly states that at least one of the members must be from the official opposition and that there is still room for the opposition in the broader sense, meaning the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party, therefore. Surely, there is a way of arranging things so that everyone is in agreement. I am sure that nobody is going to leave us on the sidelines.

We can find a way to adopt your amendments, as long as we make sure that it is not restrictive in the sense that there are four opposition members. However, the official opposition can't monopolize all four seats. I am open to this, but we have to find a way to embrace a spirit of openness and collaboration from the outset.

• (1545)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bagnell.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: We have to remember the spirit of this. If our witnesses come from all across Canada, and not too many people are interested, you still want to hear them, as long as you have at least one person from each side, but I'm flexible.

The Chair: Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: I agree with my colleague. It's partly that, especially the second official opposition and third party. If capacity prevents you from attending, would you still want the process to go ahead, as Mr. Bagnell said, to have these witnesses heard, or would you prefer that not be the case?

Mr. Randall Garrison: What the two of us are suggesting is that at least one of us, one of the two. I'm not suggesting if there's one person who actually can't be there...The wording I had proposed was that two members of opposition parties, but it did not specify the official opposition.

With respect, we're going to get confused, because we only have one amendment on the floor right now, and we need to dispose of it.

The Chair: That's true, but at least there's been a discussion. There is some overlap here. I agree, we will have to deal with the

first amendment that was moved, but I wanted to make sure we were fully informed before I call for the vote.

Mrs. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Can you read the amendment, please?

The Chair: We are inserting the word “official”, so that it would read “...including one member of the official opposition and one member of the government”.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): The two amendments being proposed could work together, but they're a little bit mutually exclusive, if we defeat one and then go to the other. There seems to be a willingness in the committee to have the motion withdrawn, and then have another motion in order to have one we all agree with.

The Chair: All in favour of this amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

Is there a second amendment?

Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Where it says “including one member of the official opposition”, insert the words “and one other opposition party”.

The Chair: Is there further discussion?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Could I ask whether this has occurred in any other committee?

Mr. Randall Garrison: It's been debated, and it's still under debate in other committees.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Okay. I ask because I know that you in the NDP, and the Bloc too, are sometimes so overstretched between committees that you can't make it. We just wouldn't want a witness to....

Mr. Randall Garrison: My committees do not conflict.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Madam Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: With regard to this amendment, I'm wondering if the mover means to say and one “member” of another party as opposed to one other “party”.

Mr. Randall Garrison: So “one member of another opposition party”.

Mr. James Bezan: Let me just say that in my 15-plus years here, we've never, ever had it occur that we've had to use this routine motion.

The Chair: All right. Let's have a look at this. This particular proposal would end up reading, “including one member of the official opposition and one member of another opposition party”.

This is the second amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

• (1550)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Chair, what happens when a meeting gets started and then for whatever reason some members have to leave? Is the meeting allowed to continue?

The Chair: I have conferred with my clerk. He says, yes, the meeting would be allowed to continue.

All in favour of the routine motion on reduced quorum with its two amendments?

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

Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Madam Chair, the next motion is 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 witnesses, there be allocated six (6) minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows: Round 1:

Conservative Party
 Liberal Party
 Bloc Québécois
 New Democratic Party

[*Translation*]

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

Conservative Party, five (5) minutes,
 Liberal Party, five (5) minutes,
 Conservative Party, five (5) minutes,
 Liberal Party, five (5) minutes,
 Bloc Québécois, two and a half (2.5) minutes,
 New Democratic Party, two and a half (2.5) minutes.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, it has been a long-standing practice of this committee that every member gets one chance to ask a question before there's any duplication. I know that this was negotiated between parties, but I think we should respect this practice.

Each and every one of us is a member of this committee and should have a chance to ask questions to witnesses. I know that in the timing laid out here, if you only have one witness and you go through these rounds, you're only at one hour, so there would be subsequent rounds. However, when the whole end is full with...usually, four witnesses, that takes us outside of an ability to get to that subsequent round.

I would propose that before we get to the Bloc and NDP having their last minutes—again, knowing that they've already asked one round of questions at six minutes—we would enable the remaining Liberal member and remaining Conservative member to have their questions. Then, to balance that, we would increase the time from two and a half minutes to three minutes for the Bloc and the NDP. So in subsequent rounds, you go Conservative Party; Liberal Party; Conservative Party; Liberal Party; Conservative Party; Liberal Party; Bloc Québécois, three minutes; New Democrats, three minutes.

I'm moving that amendment.

The Chair: With regard to the additional Conservative Party and Liberal Party rounds, are they five minutes each?

Mr. James Bezan: It would be five minutes each, and then we'd increase the Bloc and NDP to three minutes each.

Technically, it's another 11 minutes, but it allows us to get everybody up for that first chance to question witnesses.

• (1555)

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: There were long negotiations about the sharing of time to reflect the relative strength of the parties in the House of Commons rather than individuals. As I've argued before, as the Conservatives and the Liberals have five-minute rounds, they can split those rounds so that all their members get a chance to participate. It's really up to the parties, if they wish, to make that decision.

If we're going to change that, we would need to then renegotiate the number of minutes, because, with respect to Mr. Bezan's proposal, it means that there would never be a second question from the Bloc and the NDP, for any practical purposes.

The Chair: Mr. Boudrias.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Boudrias: I find that the content of the motion and the amendment is very thin in terms of clarifying our work, considering that each member's presence on this committee is, without exception, valid and legitimate.

We understand the role of the second and third opposition parties, but I do not see why, in the current framework, we would be limited to two and a half or three minutes, depending on the circumstances. It can also happen that we have gone over a question, that we do not need all the time we have been given, and that 30 seconds are enough.

There is an element of restriction that I do not approve of. I appeal to the good will of the committee to guarantee a minimum degree of fairness and to give us five minutes, if possible.

I would like to move an amendment that, in the second round of questioning, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party have five minutes, like everyone else who are here to play their role.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What has been observed in the past, before we had the motion where each person spoke, was that we would have two members of the official opposition speak, two members of government speak. There would be one or two members of government or official opposition who never got to speak, but then the individuals of the third and the fourth party got to speak twice.

In this continuing spirit of collaboration, I would like to see that every member of this committee has a chance to speak at least once during a meeting.

The Chair: Mr. Bagnell.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: I have some sympathy with Mr. Boudrias, being fair.

Mr. Garrison said that this was negotiated, but we've just changed it. Mr. Garrison made an amendment that we change this. It's different in all of the other committees, so we have our own destiny to decide at this committee.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: I would just say that this is in the spirit of fairness so that everybody does get a chance to ask questions before there is any duplication with the Bloc and NDP. I'm prepared to balance off the time by giving extra time, from two and a half to three minutes, for each of the Bloc and NDP members.

That does empower the committee. It allows all of us to participate, and I think it makes for better studies at the end of the day.

The Chair: Mr. Boudrias.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Boudrias: I am being told that this actually has been negotiated among the parties. I withdraw the proposed amendment I just made, which I attribute to my inexperience and to the fact that I am a young rookie with committees. We therefore accept the document as it stands.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Madam Chair, I will just circle back one more time to the ability to split time. It requires a bit more discipline with six minutes, but it is possible to split it not only in two but in three so that at least half of the official opposition would be able to get their time.

The philosophy is to give precedence to the distribution of the party votes in the chamber.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Chair, it is not giving precedence to the number of people in a party if some members of a party do not have an opportunity to ask questions.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion?

There is an amendment on the table and that is to "insert in the second subsequent round an additional Conservative Party for five minutes and Liberal Party for five minutes before we go to the Bloc Québécois and New Democratic Party and to increase those two to up to three minutes".

(Amendment negated)

We are now on the main motion on questioning of witnesses.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Spengemann.

● (1600)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Madam Chair, the next motion is on document distribution:

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

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

Madam Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: If a witness places documents in front of the clerk but they're only in one official language, is it permissible for someone to pick up that document?

The Chair: The clerk says he cannot distribute documents.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: If it's in a pile in front of him, can we just take one?

The Chair: The clerk says if they're in his possession, that's one thing. If they're on a table somewhere else, then that's not in his purview.

Yes, Mr. Robillard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Really, can we make sure that all documents must be ready in both official languages in order for us to begin?

[*English*]

Do you understand?

The Chair: On the routine motion on document distribution, is there any further discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Madam Chair, the next motion is on working meals:

[*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: Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: The next motion is on witness expenses:

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.

(Motion agreed to)

The next motion deals with the presence of staff at in camera meetings.

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: Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: On the question around staff, it says "House officer's office". In the past, I think it was limited to the whip's representative.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: I don't know if it was textually limited, but it was interpreted by us as the whip's office. It could be House leader or whip.

Mr. James Bezan: House leader and the whip, so you have two.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: One other person.

Mr. James Bezan: One additional, okay, that's fine. There's the restriction.

• (1605)

The Chair: Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: We had an issue arise with having interns instead of a staff person at in camera meetings. We may wish to stipulate that it is not an intern.

The Chair: Okay. I think we can say “one staff member”.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Does that include interns?

The Chair: I think that's a good discussion. I think that's something we could commit to as a committee.

The clerk said that, even if it's an intern, an intern can present, but they have to ask permission to be able to stay. If it's not okay, they'll be asked to leave.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Chair, how do we know with an intern? Let's say they're a foreign student, and maybe we're talking about Huawei and defence systems, and we've got a student at an in camera meeting who's from another country and committed to that communist party country. I think it's untenable that we risk having any intern at an in camera meeting here.

The Chair: Mr. Robillard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard: I don't think we have to get hung up on this. Each member is allowed to have one person. It is clear.

[English]

It's always been like that.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: If I recall correctly, Madam Chair, there was a discussion, as Ms. Gallant said, in the last Parliament, and the interpretation of staff members was such that it was at the discretion of the member of Parliament, who was fully authorized to staff his or her office with the appropriate personnel, and that this personnel would go through an HR process to be onboarded. It would be at the discretion of the member to then bring that person into the room or not. There was no reference anywhere in regulation that an intern requires any extra security screening, HR screening or any other kind of screening beyond that applicable to a regular staff member. She or he, once in the room, would be subject to the same scrutiny.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Martel.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): I feel that Mrs. Gallant makes an interesting point. We have a regular team. That is important when we are talking about being in camera. I would have trouble seeing someone whom we have not seen during this session show up when we are in camera. Everyone has designated people. It should be a designated person.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Baker.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd just like to add that I don't know the current practices in each of the offices of the members who are here, but I know that, in my case—and I suspect it's the case for many members—when we hire staff, they go through appropriate HR and other screening processes. Once they've been brought into our office, we as members are confident that they can be trusted with the information that's presented to them as part of our work as members of Parliament.

From my vantage point, I know that we have interns here who have positively contributed for years to members' offices in all parties. I think it would be a shame, for us as members, to not be able to take advantage of what they offer to our offices in the context of our work here on the defence committee. I think it would be a shame to have to exclude them from this work. I think each of us needs to take responsibility for the staff we hire and bring into the room.

The Chair: Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I believe the situation of the national defence committee and interns is different. I accept Madam Gallant's point. Interns here are normally on a waived security process. They are not normally assessed through the normal processes of employees because of the time lags. When you bring an intern in, you are asked to waive the security process as a member of Parliament, so they aren't subject to the same scrutiny as regular employees.

It says a “staff member”, and I believe that has usually been interpreted as not an intern unless there's permission of the chair. I think that's the way things have, in my memory, proceeded at the defence committee, and I think that's a good way to proceed. It isn't true that interns go through the full security screening. They don't, because of the short-term nature.

• (1610)

The Chair: Mr. Bagnell.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: I'm not sure about that, since the start of this Parliament. I thought we got a memo saying that anyone now in our offices had to go through that new screening, the same level of screening. I think we should probably know that before we decide on this.

Mr. Randall Garrison: It takes longer than they are here.

The Chair: Madam Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I was going to ask the same thing as Larry, that we not decide unless we know for sure that they go through the same level of screening as members of Parliament and their staff.

The Chair: That's the challenge. This was approved. This has already been negotiated with all of the parties, right? The parties didn't believe that any further restriction was needed.

Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: I appreciate that all of us are responsible for our staff. Not all the internship programs require you to sign non-disclosure agreements with your interns. Not all internship programs have you sign documents for any interns they are putting in your office, versus the PIP, for example, parliamentary interns program, where you get some highly competent staff who are completely vetted before they even start on the Hill. Also, they are signed into your office; you're responsible for them and their conduct.

There is a disparity between different internship programs. I think that's what Cheryl is saying. I agree that we are ultimately responsible for the people we bring into these rooms. I trust that all of us know that the secure information we often receive is something we want to keep to an in-camera situation. I know our staff are well informed of those requirements, but we did have that one incident last session, and that's why....

I think we can go ahead and approve this but with the understanding that we need to circle back and request more information on the parliamentary programs and those who are volunteers in our offices, where we don't have that proper managerial oversight and could compromise information security within this room.

The Chair: Could we could adopt it as it is currently written? Then we can maybe take it to the subcommittee, and get the answers to the questions that people have been putting on the floor.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Yes, as long as it's amendable.

The Chair: Yes. It would be amendable.

That will be our plan. We will put together a process for that.

All those in favour of the motion on staff at in-camera meetings, as written?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Madam Chair, the next motion is on in-camera meeting transcripts:

That one copy of the transcripts 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: Is there any discussion?

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Let's have a quick discussion. In light of the conversation we just had, we would want to attach the same consideration to the word "staff" here.

The Chair: That will be a discussion for the subcommittee then, right?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: The next motion is on notices of motion:

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 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.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1615)

The Chair: Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Madam Chair, here is the final routine motion.

[*Translation*]

This deals with independent members and clause-by-clause considerations.

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

[*English*]

(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 a 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;

[*Translation*]

(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;

[*English*]

(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.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I have a proposal for an additional routine motion. I have copies of it in both official languages.

It deals with provisions of when we go in camera and for what reasons we would go in camera.

The motion suggests four situations in which it would be appropriate for the committee to go in camera. The first is for administrative matters, and that is the standard practice of most committees for looking at witness lists and scheduling meetings and locations of meetings. The second is also routine for most committees, and that's to consider draft reports. Again, I think the national defence committee is different from other committees. In the third situation, we are sometimes offered briefings on national security and it would be appropriate for us to go in camera for those briefings. The fourth one deals with the situation where we might want to receive testimony from a witness and where it would be necessary for the protection and security of that witness that it not be a public meeting.

This is an attempt to prescribe for some circumstances that we ran into before, in particular when we had whistle-blowers who wished to give testimony to the committee and the committee didn't have a provision for going in camera to hear from those people.

The Chair: Did this get discussed at PROC in the last Parliament?

Mr. Bagnell.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Yes, I was chair of PROC in the last Parliament. We had a lengthy discussion with the parliamentary experts from each party for quite a number of weeks. We had Scott Reid from the Conservatives, and David Christopherson from your party. I forget who was from our party, but we discussed it at length and we came up with a list. Do you have copies to distribute just so we could compare?

Once you get a chance to look at it, this has some of the same things that yours does. You've added a couple of things, because it's on national security and for protection of witnesses. I don't think we had those in our motion, in the one that's coming around. I think those would be good additions.

• (1620)

Mr. Yves Robillard: Are they only in English?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Yes.

An hon. member: No, it—

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Well, the 100th report of the procedure and House affairs committee included advice for the consideration of committees of the House of Commons in the 43rd Parliament. That was tabled in the House in both languages. It has a list from (a) to (i).

I was on PROC when this was discussed, and I remember that Arnold Chan, David Christopherson and Scott Reid sat for four months, and it came before committee at least three or four times. There was a lot of discussion.

I would suggest that might be something that the subcommittee—or even discussions amongst members—look at what PROC was recommending to the 43rd Parliament, then look at that one and make sure that the motion is going to be as complete as possible for our committee.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I suggest that we proceed with this motion in front of us, and then do the same thing, refer it for further clarification.

My concern is that last time we had a very serious case of a whistle-blower who had to give testimony in public because we didn't have this provision, and who received some quite negative response in public, through the media, because of the testimony.

I'm quite willing to look at the longer list and have the subcommittee consider it, but this would give us a place to start on in camera proceedings, if we adopted this today.

The Chair: Ms. Vandenberg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I think it's a notice of motion. We have only just seen this.

I think we should have those discussions. There's nothing that says that with unanimous consent of the committee we wouldn't be able to do that, but I think we need to have longer discussions.

It didn't come to a vote in PROC for four months. We sat down and really made sure that the wording.... We worked with the clerks to make sure that there wasn't an unintended consequence.

I would suggest that maybe the subcommittee could take it up and then we could look at the text as we go.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: I've always considered motions to move in camera dilatory motions. They're non-debatable. It's a process. It's not about a substantive issue. I believe that Bosc and Gagnon is clear on it as well, that these are dilatory motions. You may want to set conditions on when we would use a dilatory motion to go in camera, but I wouldn't want us to see us debating in camera motions on and on again.

I think we have something to consider with the PROC report.

I see, Randall, that your motion captures some of that, but it doesn't capture everything that they're talking about, so maybe we could do this at the subcommittee.

The Chair: Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: I concur that there is room to explore this in greater detail at the subcommittee.

I have one quick point on the motion, part 1(c). It's food for thought. It refers to briefings concerning national security. If the challenge is to protect conversations around national security, why is it limited to briefings? It could be that the next day we're having a follow-up discussion on a briefing. It's no longer a briefing, but the import of national security is still very much there. I think it's a fairly broad scope.

Those kinds of things should be discussed in greater detail at the subcommittee I think.

The Chair: All right. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adjourn the debate on this particular motion and then have it addressed at the subcommittee? Is that a way forward?

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

Madam Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Chair, I would like to propose another routine motion. This had been a motion, as a matter of practice, prior to the last Parliament, and Richard will say it in French.

We move that, when a minister, the chief of the defence staff, or any other officer of Parliament and/or ombudsman appear before the committee, the meeting be televised.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: We would like the meeting to be televised when we have a minister or another officer of Parliament, including the ombudsman.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bagnell.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: I think there was a condition on that in the past, though, because Parliament only has the technical capability of doing two or three, and they—

Mr. James Bezan: It's in every room now. Also, they have enough personnel.

The Clerk: The capabilities have been upgraded. There is now a distinction between televising and webcasts. We now have the ability to webcast as well as televise. The House can televise two meetings at the same time. We can also webcast two other committees at the same time, and that's ramping up within the next month to four committees. In total, you could have six committees being broadcast with video, but two of them would be televised and four would be webcast.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: We still want televised.

The Clerk: Some other committees have added a stipulation: televised, and if not possible, webcast. It's like a drop-down tier.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The reason we have this in place is that sometimes we have different clerks or there's illness, and since it's not in the routine motions it gets skipped, and then we miss an opportunity for Canadians to hear what the witness had to say. That's why we put it up front in the very beginning: preferably televised, and if and only if it cannot be televised, then we would go to webcast.

The Chair: Ms. Vandenbeld.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Could you repeat which witnesses that would apply to?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: It was routine in the past for a minister, the chief of the defence staff or any other officer of Parliament, so that would be when the Auditor General, for example, or the Parliamentary Budget Officer, or the ombudsman appeared before the committee.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: How many committee meetings can meet at the same time, normally?

The Clerk: It varies, but usually about six.

Mr. James Bezan: So we have the capabilities now with cameras and all. It is not contingent upon being in any particular room, because all the rooms have cameras in them.

The Chair: Madam Vandenbeld.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: If we were to decide to do an in camera meeting—for instance, if the chief of the defence staff were to come and the committee actually wanted to have that done in camera—would it allow for that kind of thing? Is it that every public meeting be televised? Yes.

The Chair: All in favour of adopting this as an additional routine motion?

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

That's the end of the routine motions now.

Is it the committee's wish to discuss the composition of the subcommittee or is that something you want to save for later on?

Mr. James Bezan: No, Madam Chair. I think you'd want to get that set up sooner rather than later, because we need to start plan-

ning for our work. We have very little time between now and the end of March to start planning that work.

The Chair: The subcommittee on agenda and procedure requires a member from each party. We don't have to have the names now, but they should go to the clerk by the end of the day.

Mr. James Bezan: Traditionally, the vice-chairs have been on it. We need to have one from the Liberals and one from the NDP. I think it's pretty straightforward.

The Chair: All right. We have Mr. Bezan, Mr. Boudrias, Mr. Garrison, Mr. Baker and me on the subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

• (1630)

Mr. James Bezan: I think we should discuss future business. I have already been referred supplementary estimates (B). They need to be reported back to the House by March 23. That leaves us only three meetings between now and then.

I move the following motion, which I have in French and English and will circulate:

That the Committee invite the Minister of National Defence to appear regarding Supplementary Estimates (B), 2019-20 before March 13th, 2020 for no fewer than two hours, and that the meeting be televised.

We have a break week the first week of March. We have a break week the third week of March. We have as potential meeting days this coming Wednesday, and March 9 and 11.

The Chair: Madam Vandenbeld.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: I could pass on the information that we should try to do it before March 13, but I think saying “before March 23” might be more realistic, just to make sure it is before the end of that day when we do have to report back.

Perhaps we could amend the motion to say “before March 23”. I will endeavour to try to get the minister earlier than that, but that would give some flexibility based on schedules.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: The only reason I didn't put March 23 was that on March 23 it's reported back. Even though March 23 is our meeting day, I believe routine proceedings in the House would take place right after question period. It pre-empts us having a meeting on March 23.

Supplementary estimates are all deemed reported on March 23. We aren't sitting the week of March 16. That's why I put March 13. It's logical for what we have to do.

The Chair: Madam Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I believe in the last Parliament there was not a single time when we had the minister before it was deemed passed in the House. This time we want to endeavour to have him come before the committee before it's deemed already voted on and sent to the House.

The Chair: At the other committees I've been involved with, we have had the minister for an hour and the officials.

Madam Vandenbeld.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Just going back to the date, perhaps we could get clarification. I think it's by March 26, in fact, that we have to report back. I don't know if there's anyone from the clerk's office who might be able to clarify that.

If it is March 26, then I would go back to saying "before March 23". Again, I'll see if he can come before then, but perhaps we could do it before March 23.

Mr. James Bezan: Although March 26 is the last opposition day of the cycle, it all needs to be reported back three days before. That's how supplementary estimates are designed. To deal with motions of supply, the last supply day is March 26. Mark it back three days and it's March 23. All supplementary (B)s have to be back to the House or deemed reported back as studied, even though we might not get a chance to study them.

The Chair: Mr. Bagnell.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: On the point you were making, yes, I think it's standard that ministers would come for an hour in most cases. Then the officials would stay for the second hour.

• (1635)

Mr. James Bezan: Well, historically, minority governments, both Conservative and now Liberal, will have....

Larry, you and I were here back in 2004. Ministers used to sit at the end of the table for two hours back in the day. We expected them to be here for two hours.

The Chair: Ms. Vandenberg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Instead of putting in a date, perhaps we can say, "before the supplementary estimates have to be reported back to the House from the committee".

Mr. James Bezan: We're not going to be having a meeting during the break week.

As the parliamentary secretary, you must know the minister's calendar. You should be able to get this done before the 13th. I know when I was PS, I always had it.

The Chair: Are you moving an amendment, Ms. Vandenberg?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Yes, "before the supplementary estimates are deemed reported back to the House".

Mr. James Bezan: The report would have to be prepared in both official languages for presentation.

Ms. Evelyn Lukyniuk (Committee Clerk): We don't know if it's going to be the 23rd. It's three days before the 26th or three days before the last supply day has been designated. We don't know when the last day would be designated.

Mr. James Bezan: We do know the last supply day is the 27th.

Ms. Evelyn Lukyniuk: Yes, but in theory the government could designate all the last supply days this week which would mean that they would be deemed reported back.

Mr. James Bezan: Right. They could move the yardstick south. We know the end date, but they can move it forward.

The Chair: The amendment to that main motion would change the words "before March 13, 2020" to say "before the supplementary estimates are deemed reported back to the House".

Mr. Bagnell.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Could the clerk tell us if there's a substantive difference in the result of those two?

The Clerk: The only procedural variance would be that the first version has an actual deadline, whereas the second version is a moving target. It could change. It would not necessarily be the same date.

Mr. James Bezan: It could actually move forward. It won't move back, but it could move forward.

The Clerk: When the House returns after the next break, if the government decided to designate, starting on the Monday, every day a supply day, then the last supply day would occur that week and the supplementary estimates would be deemed reported back three days before that. It's three days before the last supply day is designated.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I withdraw my amendment.

The Chair: We need unanimous consent to withdraw.

(Amendment withdrawn)

Mr. Bagnell.

• (1640)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: I'd like to propose another amendment. I move that the minister appear for not less than one hour.

The Chair: Mrs. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I'd like to make an amendment to that amendment by replacing "an hour" with "two hours".

The Chair: The amendment is that "no less than one hour, and that the meeting be televised."

(Amendment negated)

The question is on the main motion.

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I would just like to mention that the scenario Mr. Bagnell was trying to put forth, where the minister is there for one hour, is why the proposal had been made that every member have a chance to speak, because maybe in two hours every member may get a chance to ask a question, but when it's only one hour that you have the minister there, it is very difficult for every person to have a chance to ask a question.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Gallant.

Now we have our subcommittee on agenda and procedures.

I would like to suggest that the members of that subcommittee meet this Wednesday at our regularly scheduled time, and we will deal with the issues that have been referred to the subcommittee by the committee.

Is there any discussion on that?

Yes, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: After we conclude this vote, I have a couple of notices of motion that I would like to present to the committee so that the subcommittee could deal with them on Wednesday.

The Chair: All in favour of the subcommittee meeting at our next regular meeting on Wednesday?

(Motion agreed to)

Are there any further notices of motion?

Yes, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I have two notices of motion that I have available in both official languages. It's not my intention to talk at any length about these.

One is that the standing committee invite Canada's ambassador for Women, Peace and Security to appear before the committee at the earliest opportunity.

The second invites the committee to undertake a study on mental health and self-harm within the Canadian military, including my private member's bill.

I'll just ask that those be distributed for consideration by the subcommittee.

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

Madam Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I move:

That the Minister of National Defence appear at the Committee for no fewer than two hours to provide Members with a briefing on Operation IMPACT and the Canadian-led NATO capacity building and support mission in Iraq, and that the meeting be televised.

I have copies in English and French.

• (1645)

The Chair: There are a couple of different ways of dealing with the notice of motion put forward by Madam Gallant. We could ask the subcommittee to deal with this, like we're doing with Mr. Garrison's motions, or we could have a discussion at the present time.

Madam Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Right now we do have the time. Historically, what happens is, during the subcommittee, you discuss it, but then ultimately everything has to come back to this committee anyhow, so it's better just to deal with it while we have the time.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Can we ask to suspend for three minutes?

The Chair: Of course.

• (1647)

(Pause)

• (1650)

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor.

Madam Gallant, on the notice of motion.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In the past we did have regular briefings on ongoing missions. We got away from that in the last four years. As committee members, we're better informed. The best way to get the information is first-hand from the minister.

Our forces are suffering from a very poor recruitment phase right now. We're short of pilots. We're short of people in almost all the careers. Opening up the committee to the public so they can hear first-hand what the minister has to say about the ongoing operations can attract people to the forces, rather than their having to read everything through the lens of a reporter. We are the committee on national defence. We should have the right to hear first-hand what is going on, recognizing that what we're listening to is not secret or classified. We're getting the basics so we know what's going on with our troops in our own country.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bagnell.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: I'm very in favour of this, but I move that we adjourn the debate until Wednesday's subcommittee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, I know that people don't want to be here any longer debating, so I'm going to table notices of motion so that we have these at subcommittee. The first one is:

That the Parliamentary Budget Officer appear at Committee for no fewer than two hours to provide Members with a briefing on his February 2019 report, Fiscal Analysis of the Interim F-18 Aircraft and that the meeting be televised.

The second motion on which I shall give notice is:

That the Committee undertake a study on the state of Canada's NORAD modernization and need for critical upgrades, that the meetings be televised, that the findings be reported to the House, and that the Government table a comprehensive response.

If others on the committee have ideas that they want to be studied, they should table those motions now so that we have a chance to consider them before we get to the meeting on Wednesday.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel: I also have a motion.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Martel.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel:

That the Auditor General appear before the Committee before March 5, 2020, concerning the fall 2018 *Report 3—Canada's Fighter Force—National Defence*, and that the meeting be televised.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bagnell.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: To Mr. Bezan's motion on NORAD, I just want to let him know that I was planning to submit something similar, but to add that in that motion we also look at where military spending in the north could help civilian infrastructure needs. The military has a big budget, and so things they build could also be used by civilian people. That's just as a part of the review of NORAD.

The Chair: Mr. Dowdall.

Mr. Terry Dowdall: I have a notice of motion as well:

That the Committee, in accordance with its mandate under Standing Order 111 (1) and (2), invite the Department of National Defence Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel) appointed on November 11th 2019 to testify before the Committee, that the meeting be televised, that the findings be reported to the House, and that the Government table a comprehensive response.

I have copies in French and English.

The Chair: This too will be referred to the subcommittee?

Mr. Terry Dowdall: That's correct.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Troy Crosby is the new ADM of Materiel. Under our usual order in council appointments, we have 30 sitting days to report it back, but that has long passed. He was appointed back in November.

I don't know if that's still in effect or not. Are there still 30 sitting days on that OIC?

Ms. Evelyn Lukyniuk: I haven't seen the order in council—

Mr. James Bezan: It's because we're just getting struck. That's the problem, right?

The Chair: Mr. Robillard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Mr. Martel's proposal says “appear before the Committee before...”

[*English*]

The Chair: We are just going to take that to the subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Yves Robillard: I know, but it doesn't make sense.

[*Translation*]

We will not be here.

[*English*]

The Chair: Those are the routine motions. We have notices of motion to go to the subcommittee. The subcommittee has been established and will meet for the first time on Wednesday.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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