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# Standing Committee on Health

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 014**

Monday, January 25, 2021

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Chair: Mr. Ron McKinnon





## Standing Committee on Health

Monday, January 25, 2021

• (1830)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

I'd like to welcome everyone to meeting number 14 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health. The committee is meeting today pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), as requested by four members of the committee, to discuss their request to undertake a study of all matters related to Canada's COVID-19 vaccination strategy.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021. Therefore, members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. So that you are aware, the webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

Today's meeting is also taking place in a new webinar format—

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Pardon me, Mr. Chair, but there hasn't been any interpretation for the past four or five sentences.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry.

[English]

Are you getting translation now?

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** Right now, yes.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm not sure where I left off.

Today's meeting is also taking place in a new webinar format. Webinars are for public committee meetings and are available only to members, their staff and witnesses. Members may have remarked that the entry to the meeting was much quicker and that they immediately entered as an active participant. All functionalities for active participants remain the same. Staff will be—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair, on that point. The “raise hand” function does not work. I would like my hand to be noted. I would like to be on the speakers list. The “raise hand” function in the update does not work.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** I was just going to say the same thing, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

The clerk's “raise hand” is working. Could you try that again?

We'll have to work without that particular functionality.

I shall continue—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Chair, on that point of order, I'd like to be recognized as the first to speak. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Yes, Ms. Rempel Garner. You will be first to speak to move your motion when the time comes.

Hopefully, the technical staff will be able to address this problem with the “raise hand” function.

I shall continue with the housekeeping matters here.

All functionalities for active participants remain the same—which may or may not be correct in the current circumstances. Staff will be non-active participants only and can, therefore, only view the meeting in the gallery view.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants of this meeting that taking screenshots or photos of your screen is not permitted.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations from health authorities, to remain healthy and safe, all those attending the meeting in person are to maintain two-metre physical distancing, must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room—it is highly recommended that the mask be worn at all times, including when seated—and must maintain proper hand hygiene, using the provided hand sanitizer at the room entrance. As the chair, I will be enforcing these measures for the duration of the meeting, and I thank the members in advance for their co-operation.

For those participating virtually, I would like to outline a few rules to follow. Members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for the meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of “floor”, “English” or “French”. With the latest Zoom version, you may now speak in the language of your choice without needing to select the corresponding language channel.

You will also notice that the platform's "raise hand" feature is now in a more easily accessed location on the main tool bar should you wish to speak or alert the chair. With regard to that point, I note that I don't see that particular functionality either.

Members participating in person, proceed as you usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room. Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. If you are in the room, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer. I will remind you that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair. When you're not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

Before we start, I would like to make a couple of comments regarding the letter that requested this meeting.

First, the letter decries that it has been 45 days since the previous meeting. I find this odd since this is the normal intersession interval that happens every year at this time. There is nothing unusual or remarkable about it. The letter continues on to say:

We are deeply concerned that you have chosen not to call a meeting during the Committee's next regularly scheduled time slot. We expect the House of Commons to adopt a motion to renew the provisions which empower Committees to meet virtually. There is no reason this meeting cannot occur.

I should point out that, as of the scheduled start of the meeting this morning, there was, in fact, no such motion available, so the committee was not, in fact, empowered to meet at the prescribed time. There was also no clear expectation as to when such an authorization might be achieved, given that the state of the discussions last week was somewhat in flux.

It seems to me unreasonable to bring the House staff, to bring the committee staff and to set up witnesses who might sit there and hang all day waiting for such approval that might not come. I think it would be totally irresponsible to call a meeting in those circumstances.

This impediment is, in fact, acknowledged in the letter, which carries on to say:

If the house does not adopt an Order to empower this committee to meet safely, we will rescind our request to hold this meeting.

• (1835)

I would like to point out that this meeting was called on an erroneous pretext. Nevertheless, no such pretext is, in fact, required to call such a meeting. The only requirement is the signature of four members and a stated reason for holding a meeting, and those have been met, so here we are.

Let me say that I certainly welcome the opportunity to bring forward ministers at this time. I think it's very timely and very important. However, I have some concerns that the motion as proposed is not receivable. I'd like to explain why I have those concerns and follow up with some suggestions on how I think they could be addressed.

I note that the House motion of October 26 states:

That the Standing Committee on Health be instructed to undertake a study on the emergency situation facing Canadians in light of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that this study evaluate, review and examine any issues relevant to this situation, such as, but not limited to....

It then proceeds to enumerate a few examples.

I contend that this requires that any study, any receipt of information and witness testimony on COVID-19-related matters be subject to this motion. I think that is inherent in the request for the meeting itself today.

That being the case, I'm troubled as to where to fit this particular request in that structure. The most obvious place into which to fit that is paragraph (bb), which says:

(bb) within seven days after all documents have been tabled pursuant to paragraph (aa), the Minister of Health, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry be ordered to appear separately as witnesses before the Standing Committee on Health, for at least three hours each.

The problem with fitting that in is that it's triggered only upon receipt of all documents noted in the previous paragraph.

As we know from correspondence received from the Privy Council Office and the office of the law clerk, there are some millions of pages of documents in the offing, a substantial portion, the majority, of which of course require translation. This will involve a considerable amount of work and a considerable amount of time, and will also tax the capabilities of the law clerk's office in order to vet them for appropriate redactions and to prioritize them according to our previous request of the House.

This means that the timing of this paragraph (bb) being triggered is undetermined, and I suggest that is a problem we might want to rectify at this point.

Failing the application of paragraph (bb), paragraph (t) of that order specifies "that each party represented on the committee be entitled to select one witness per one-hour witness panel, and two witnesses per two-hour panel". As we know, according to protocol and custom, ministers typically will attend in conjunction with other ministers and staff, but not at the same time as other witnesses. This kind of means that paragraph (t) of that order cannot be met by this motion.

In order to address those particular concerns, I would suggest to Ms. Rempel Garner that she might consider, when she moves a motion, first of all, incorporating a provision to report to the House a request to change paragraph (bb) from "within seven days after all documents" to simply "documents".

Second, I would suggest that she indicate in the motion that the invitation to ministers be pursuant to paragraph (bb) of the House motion of October 26, and, provided the House grants concurrence to the indicated report, request changing paragraph (bb) and change the time in today's motion to three hours or drop the time entirely because it is actually encompassed in paragraph (bb) in any case.

• (1840)

That is my main point regarding the receivability of this, but I would also suggest that the second bullet of this particular proposed motion is not needed, and I would suggest that she omit it. The last meeting on the mental health aspects of COVID-19 is currently scheduled for Friday coming up. This provision of the motion would simply move that to Monday. Frankly, by Monday we could have that whole matter done and dusted, so I think this would be a good idea, and I would suggest that she just omit that particular requirement.

The last point is that the third point in this motion is in part redundant, to the extent that it duplicates some aspects of Mr. Davies' motion of November 13 and, to some extent, seeks to overturn it, although that is to the extent that the previous point on the mental health meeting is or is not retained as it stands. I would suggest in this case that when she moves the motion she change this aspect merely to specify how many meetings—between one and four inclusive per Mr. Davies' motion—to specify for the vaccine portion of the study.

That having been said, I will open the floor to Ms. Rempel Garner to move her motion as she pleases.

• (1845)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you, Chair.

First, as vice-chair, I'd like to clarify some information that the chair provided.

The meeting we are currently undertaking as the Standing Committee on Health is happening during the middle of a pandemic that has caused many deaths in Canada and great economic burden on millions of Canadians. The meeting we're having is happening under the auspices of Standing Order 106(4). This is a procedural provision that allows members of the committee to call a meeting in order to consider business that might be of pressing urgency for the committee.

The notice that was provided to the committee, which precipitated this meeting, was done because of a very urgent situation that the country is facing right now. The fact is that many other countries around the world are receiving doses of what could arguably be described as the hottest commodity on the planet, the life-saving Pfizer vaccine. However, Canada is not, even though the government provided assurances to Canadians that this would be happening. This is something the government should have anticipated, given that it was briefed by the pharmaceutical company throughout the fall, and that production scale-ups happen when there's a new product.

The reason for this meeting is to hopefully move a motion to determine why Canada is not receiving these vaccines right now. Regardless of political stripe, I hope we can put aside our differences

and agree that this is something that, at this present moment, the Standing Committee on Health should be investigating.

Why did we use Standing Order 106(4)? The chair asserts that there's nothing remarkable about this situation, that 45 days passed and that is the standard period of time that committees don't sit over the holidays, but this is exactly why 106(4) exists. I would argue that something remarkable has happened, and that is that dozens of people are dying in our country every day from a virus that could be prevented if people were administered the vaccine.

That characterization of bureaucracy and pedantry is standing in the way of the work of a parliamentary committee tasked with the mandate of health, during a pandemic. That it should somehow be unremarkable that it is not meeting is slightly problematic.

The second thing is that Parliament resumed on Monday. For those who are watching, and this might be inside baseball for people, our committee typically meets on Mondays and Fridays. There was no meeting called by the chair for this Monday. When I saw that last week, I was concerned. It meant that the committee would not have met for business today, which meant we wouldn't meet until Friday. We would have had a meeting called by the Liberals, and we probably wouldn't have had an opportunity to call the Minister of Health or the Minister of Procurement to talk about a vaccine shortage that is literally killing people and will be for some time to come in the future.

Canadians deserve better than that, and that's why we put this request forward. We need to put aside bureaucratic arguments about why the committee isn't meeting, and start meeting the needs of our constituents. That's what this committee is for, to actually hold the government to account on its decisions.

The chair has put forward a bunch of reasons why we should be editing this motion, and why it could fit under this motion or that motion. The reality is that the committee has the ability to change its mandate and its tasks as it sees fit, as the government often reminds us when we ask questions about committees in the House when the government manages to put things through that it finds beneficial.

In this situation, it's important to remind the chair that we are facing a monumental challenge in this country. We need answers on why we have a vaccine shortage and, more importantly, what the government is going to do to fix it. That's the only hope we can offer Canadians right now, and it's of the greatest significance. What we're discussing is probably the greatest thing that Parliament is doing right now. That's the gravity of this, and we need to do this.

I would be very uncomfortable going back to my constituents and reading a lot of wordy procedure as to why we couldn't invite the health minister or the Minister of Procurement, who is responsible for getting Canada the vaccine, to the health committee today.

● (1850)

I actually don't accept any of the rationale the chair tried to put forward with regard to how I should edit my motion. The motion I'm about to put forward is in the best interest of all Canadians. It still allows the Liberals to proceed with the meetings they've put forward. It gives the Liberals, actually, the opportunity to decide whether or not they want to proceed with a meeting that was agreed to in an entirely different context six weeks ago, before we were in a vaccine shortage that other countries aren't in right now. That's really going to be up to the Liberals. I'm going to work that into the wording of the motion.

Given the shortage, and given that we need answers for Canadians, I think it's important that we consider the motion as I put it forward in the letter. Canadians need to know when exactly they're going to be able to get a vaccine, and the provinces need to know when vaccines are going to arrive so that they can plan to deliver them.

Chair, should you rule it out of order, my instinct would be to challenge your ruling for all of the reasons I just gave you. We have to do this, and you know it. Every Canadian is depending on this committee to do this type of review. We have doctors on this committee. We need to get to the bottom of this, and we need a path forward.

With that, Chair, I move:

That the committee invite the Minister of Health, the Minister of Procurement and their officials to appear before the committee for no less than two hours each regarding all matters related to Canada's COVID-19 vaccination strategy, and that this meeting occur no later than February 5, 2021;

That in accordance with a motion previously passed by the committee, the clerk of the committee be instructed to schedule the final agreed-upon fourth meeting regarding the Liberal-selected mental health theme of the COVID-19 study during the committee's regularly scheduled meeting on February 1, 2021, unless the Liberal members of the committee elect to forgo this meeting in favour of beginning meetings on the next theme of the committee's COVID-19 study;

That the committee select its next theme of the COVID-19 study in the agreed-upon manner set out in the original motion, with the next theme being selected by the Conservative members of the committee, with the Conservative members selecting the theme of all matters related to Canada's COVID-19 vaccination strategy, and that the first meeting of this theme commence at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the committee after February 1, 2021, which is February 5, 2021, unless the Liberal members of the committee elect to forgo the last meeting in the prior theme per the option outlined above, and that parties shall submit witnesses to the clerk for these four meetings pertaining to vaccines no later than January 28, 2021 at 4 p.m. Eastern.

Again, to colleagues who are considering how to vote on this motion, every one of you has communities that are under lockdown right now. For those of you who are in Quebec, your community is under a curfew. Many of you have long-term care facilities in your riding. I know I have colleagues who have emailed me that they've had a variant go through their long-term care facility, and 40-plus people have died in recent days. Front-line health care workers are calling in tears, asking, "When am I getting my vaccine?" In some cases, some people have received one dose of the vaccine and are not sure when they're going to get the second. If it's delayed for a certain period of time, what does that mean for their health? Is it going to work? Provincial governments are telling the federal government that they can't deliver what they don't have.

There are times when we will fight on this committee. There are times when we are going to disagree on policy, but this motion is very reasonably laid out. It gives the Liberals the option of proceeding on Friday per the schedule we had before Christmas, before all of this happened. That's really up to the Liberal Party. I didn't want to fight you guys on that. It's up to you.

We give you the choice, but there is no situation in which the Liberals can argue that the Minister of Health and the Minister of Procurement should not be coming before the federal Standing Committee on Health within the next couple of weeks to answer these questions. Every day that we go without having them, without getting these details and just hearing more platitudes, is another day that people are getting infected, that health care workers have stress and anxiety and that we're under curfew or lockdown.

● (1855)

We have the foreign affairs minister floating the idea of the Emergencies Act. Our country needs to get this together. For those of you who haven't had a situation like this—or perhaps it's your first term in Parliament—this is real, and this is why this committee exists. It exists to get these types of answers. Should this motion pass, what it's saying is that we're going to start the next theme of the study either next week or on Friday, depending on what the Liberal Party wants to do.

It's up to you. Mental health is important. Vaccines are important. It's over to you guys.

Also, to get some answers, we're inviting to committee the ministers who are responsible for getting Canada's vaccines. How are we getting through this? I'll be very honest with you guys. I just had a devastatingly terrible panel on CTV National News with one of our Liberal colleagues, who was trying to suggest that Canada wouldn't make the target unless we were approving vaccine candidates that no other country has approved. He then had to walk that statement back. I'd like to have the ministers here to get to the bottom of that.

With deep respect and humbleness, I submit the motion as put forward in this Standing Order 106 notice. Chair, if you rule it out of order, I will be challenging you on that ruling, because I believe that you would be ruling it out of order based on pedantry, not on the Canadian public interest. I would encourage all of my colleagues to ensure that your ruling is overturned.

We need to have the ministers here and we need to get some answers from the pharmaceutical companies on vaccine supply, because we need a path forward. I would not feel comfortable as a vice-chair for the Standing Committee on Health, as a member of Parliament or as a Canadian if we were doing anything less. This is what we need to do over the next month as a committee: put differences aside and get to the bottom of this.

For those of you who are Liberal Party members, I have had moments where I have had to think about what is in the best interests of my constituents and not necessarily in the best interests of my political party. I would really encourage you to think about that in this moment.

There is no reason, no logical reason, why the Minister of Health and the Minister of Procurement should not be coming before the federal Standing Committee on Health at this moment in time. I'm hoping that we can dispense with this motion, we can support it, we can schedule things out and we can move forward with getting some answers and some hope for Canadians.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

I would like to respond to a couple of points you made. This meeting was not called by the Liberals. It was called by the chair.

You've mentioned that the committee is empowered to change its mandate and to set its own tasks. That is normally the case. However, we are also bound in this instance by the order of the House, which overrides those particular freedoms, and it is my job as the chair to attempt to maintain the integrity of that motion and to enforce it as well as can be done.

While I certainly share your view that it is important that we get the ministers before us—and I have many suggestions that would make that possible—under the particular constraints of the House motion of October 26, I don't see how we can do that except as I have proposed earlier. In that respect, I am obligated to find that this motion as moved is unreceivable in this—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I challenge the ruling.

**The Chair:** Thank you. That's understood.

Shall the decision of the chair be sustained? If you vote “yes”, then you're supporting the decision of the chair. If you vote “no”, you are voting to overturn the decision of the chair.

Mr. Clerk, I would ask that you conduct a roll call vote.

(Ruling of the chair overturned: nays 6; yeas 5)

● (1900)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk, and thank you to the committee.

Since the committee considers this matter to be receivable, the motion stands. However, I'm still obligated to try to fit this into the requirements of the House motion, and since paragraph (bb) does not pertain here, that brings paragraph (t) into operation, which provides that each party has the right to submit one witness per one-hour meeting and two per two-hour meeting. As noted, this doesn't really fit when we're inviting ministers, so this cannot be met in the case of ministerial appearances.

However, this is a right that the parties have, not an obligation. They are not obligated to submit that number of witnesses. The parties can agree to waive their right, but this would require that the motion be agreed to unanimously.

On that caveat, it is my ruling that this motion will need to have unanimous consent to pass.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I challenge your ruling.

**The Chair:** I understand. I'll put it to the committee.

Mr. Clerk, would you please conduct the vote?

(Ruling of the chair overturned: nays 6; yeas, 5)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk, and thank you to the committee. Frankly, there is no surprise there, although I feel I have fulfilled my obligation to enforce the House motion as well as I could.

We will now undertake debate on the motion, as Ms. Rempel Garner has proposed it.

We now have hands showing up on the participants list. That seems to be working now, so for points of order I will ask people to sing out verbally and we will try to keep track of those. For the speaking order in the debate, I would ask that people use the “raise hand” function, unless that continues to not work for any of you.

First up, I have Mr. Davies. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again, it's good to see everybody back. I hope everybody had a chance to relax, and I wish a happy new year to everyone.

I'm going to speak in favour of the motion. If I get right down to the chase here, I don't want to comment on events that have just been ruled upon, but we're here because it's Monday and, up to now, we haven't heard anything from the chair about what the proposed schedule would be. I heard the chair reference that this Friday we would be doing the mental health study. I haven't seen any notification of that.

One thing we all share is a sense of urgency. I would have hoped that last week we would have received a proposed schedule of meetings from the chair that allowed us to meet today, this Friday and next week in an orderly way, so that we can get right to business. However, that didn't happen.

I also want to point out that a Standing Order 106 meeting is an extraordinary meeting. It's the prerogative of any four members of this committee to sign such a letter and cause us to meet within the prescribed time period, and that can be at any time. With great respect to the chair, that operates in addition to the normal business of the committee. It doesn't contradict, in any way, any motion that's previously been passed, so I find this motion in order.

The real question is this: What does this motion do? The motion calls the ministers before this committee. I think it gives them until February 5, which I think is respectful. I'm open to suggestions. I know the ministers are busy but it's January 25 today, so that's a good 10 days from now. I think I speak for all members of Parliament and every Canadian when I say that we're extremely anxious about the state of vaccines in Canada. Governments do what governments do. The government may try to put forward as positive a picture as possible, but the fact is that we're receiving no vaccines this week and receiving 79,000 vaccines next week. The United States last week vaccinated an average of 1.1 million people a day. We haven't even vaccinated 800,000 people in Canada to date, so we have production issues.

I want to also point out that, just this morning, there was disturbing news out of the EU that they are thinking about proposing export controls on vaccines manufactured in Europe. The government blithely says that this is just a temporary disruption and not to worry about it, but there could be other problems coming. The fact that the government has not released a single word of a single contract it has signed with seven vaccine manufacturers leaves us in the dark on this. I think all Canadians deserve to know what's going on as much as possible, and I think the ministers have an obligation to come to our committee to address this.

The other thing I like about the motion is that it proposes a way forward. I'm open to some finessing of the dates, but the way I read the motion is that Monday hence, we have our fourth meeting on mental health, which was the final meeting of the Liberals' priority on the COVID study, so that takes care of next Monday. The following Friday we begin the first meeting of the Conservatives' priority, which is on vaccines. By the way, I still think as a committee we need to pass the assessment of how many meetings we will attribute to that. Ms. Rempel Garner's motion mentions four, but we do have to formally decide that. I personally will support four meetings.

That leaves us with the question of when we schedule the ministers if they have to appear before February 5, which is next Friday, as the motion suggests. That would mean we would have to have the ministers here between next Monday and next Friday.

I'm not going to move this at this point, because I want to hear what my colleagues have to say about this, but it would make sense to me to reschedule this a little by saying this Friday is the fourth meeting of the mental health theme of the COVID study. We then begin the Conservatives' first day of vaccines on Monday, and then we invite the ministers to come the following Friday to give the ministers the maximum amount of time to come.

● (1905)

I would be interested to see how Ms. Rempel Garner feels about that, if that's a friendly amendment or if she feels strongly about

that. I don't see in the motion what we're doing with this Friday. Given the urgency that she so eloquently spoke of, and that I think we all feel, I would like to use this Friday, if at all possible.

The final thing the motion does, and I think it's positive, is that it gives a deadline for our submitting witnesses for the vaccine component of the study. I think it's January 28, which gives us several days to submit what amounts to four witnesses. We each get one witness per meeting, assuming the committee agrees that we'll allocate four meetings to the vaccine part of this study, which I personally will support. I think most of us will, because we all know how important vaccines are.

Those are my thoughts on why I support the motion. I would support it the way it's presently written, but I think my suggestions of utilizing this Friday and putting some shape to these meetings make sense. I'm interested in hearing my colleagues' thoughts on that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Davies.

I would point out that at no time did I indicate that the use of Standing Order 106(4) was inappropriate or out of order.

I should note that although I thought the notice had gone out, we had scheduled for this coming Friday the last meeting on the mental health portion of the study, as I mentioned in my previous remarks.

We'll go now to Mr. Thériault.

● (1910)

[*Translation*]

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

I don't want to repeat what my colleague Mr. Davies said. However, there are still some things that must be noted.

First, I want to commend my colleagues' efforts to hold this type of meeting this evening. We must move quickly to organize our work. Without the motion—signed by four of our colleagues—to hold this evening's meeting, we wouldn't be trying to organize our work quickly.

Mr. Chair, I'm a little surprised that, in your opening remarks, you didn't refer to a new development over the break. We heard reports of a vaccine supply disruption. We're well aware that, in the current crisis, the only way to see the light at the end of the tunnel is to vaccinate people as quickly as possible, especially the most vulnerable people and the front-line workers.



Restrictive measures are in place. The measures in Quebec are particularly stringent. I'm thinking of the establishment of a curfew. In barely an hour, we'll be under curfew. As a result, we must be able to start organizing our work this evening.

Of course, the House couldn't have known in advance about the agreement regarding a hybrid Parliament. However, in practice, as soon as it became clear that everyone would set aside partisanship and agree on the hybrid format, it was entirely appropriate to arrange to meet as soon as possible, on the same day that Parliament returned, in order to organize the committee's work.

The motion moved by my colleague Ms. Rempel Garner simply seeks to organize our work in accordance with the motion adopted by the House. This is absolutely what the motion seeks to do. Furthermore, she was careful not to upset our Liberal colleagues who, before the holidays, wanted the committee to start the study of the motion passed in the House by looking at how the crisis is affecting mental health. My colleague was also kind enough to point out that the Liberals could, if they wished, ensure that the committee immediately address the vaccination issue, which is the most urgent. She gave them the choice.

I see in this motion nothing more than a desire to organize our work in a way that saves time. That's why I support the motion. The motion also states that the vaccination issue, which was everyone's priority before the holidays, is the Conservatives' priority. In light of the supply disruption and the scheduling issues, I'd like the Liberals to quickly tell me whether the government, on its honour, is making a commitment to all taxpayers in Quebec and Canada to meet the vaccination targets.

We must be able to quickly ask the Minister of Health and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement questions. I gather from the motion that we could start a series of four work sessions next Monday.

We voted against your ruling that the motion is out of order. I commend my colleagues' efforts and I want to reassure all my colleagues. This crisis is significant enough. This crisis has resulted in far too many deaths for us to indulge at times in partisan politics. I can assure you that I'll never let myself get drawn into this type of vice or partisan behaviour.

● (1915)

I'm here this evening in good faith. I'm pleased to see that, as soon as the House returned, we could meet and organize the committee's work. This includes shedding light on the vaccination and the issues encountered.

That's why I support the motion and why I challenged your ruling, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Thériault.

[English]

We will go now to Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Fisher, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all of the members who have spoken so far and the mover of the motion for recognizing the importance of this topic.

We recognized the importance of this topic when Mr. Davies, in his brilliant moment of bringing us all together, brought forward something we all supported. Not knowing the Fridays and the Mondays and all the different dates, I was under the expectation that we would begin studying vaccines on Monday. Perhaps that's not the case, but I do think it's something that we all agreed we needed to study.

No one on this committee, since we've formed, has ever voted against having the ministers come to this committee. I think we all—and I see some heads nodding—know that we want to have the ministers here and I do believe we all want the ministers here to speak on the topic that Ms. Rempel Garner brought forward today.

Mr. Chair, I am not exactly sure how I can get.... I know we can't have a back-and-forth between members, but was there, in the motion, the intention that this would be one of the up to four vaccine meetings, and that this would represent a culmination of all of the parties' witnesses for that particular meeting?

**The Chair:** Mr. Fisher, the motion is silent on that. If that's something you wish to clarify, it's something you should amend the motion to take care of.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** It may not need to be amended. I would like to ask Ms. Rempel Garner if it was her intention that the vaccine meeting with the ministers—whether it's the first one or the second one, and hopefully the first one—would be one of the up to four that the committee determines? I think we're all going to support going to the maximum on this.

I know, Mr. Chair, it's unusual to ask another member, but is it the intention of the motion that this would count as one of the up to four meetings that this committee is choosing to do as its next study?

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner, do you wish to respond to this?

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** I apologize. It's probably not appropriate to ask that question.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** That's okay.

I would just respond with a question to the parliamentary secretary, given that he has the responsibility of helping the government set its legislative agenda.

Does the government feel that four meetings, including a meeting with the minister, is adequate for Canadians to understand why, in a situation—

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I have the floor.

**The Chair:** No, you don't. I am the chair. I have the floor.

You were not called upon to engage in a debate. You were called on to respond to Mr. Fisher's—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I am responding. You might not like what I have to say, but I am responding, Chair.

**The Chair:** In my view it's debate, and we'll go back to Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Fisher, please carry on.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Part of Mr. Davies' motion, the unanimous motion that we passed, required unanimous support to go over four. I am just, again, trying to seek some clarity. Perhaps we would have support unanimously to go to more than four. I don't know.

I'm not certain at this point—

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Chair, I have a point of order.

I get that Mr. Fisher has asked a reasonable question in regard to what the meetings would be used for. I think it would be just as reasonable to have an answer on that from my colleague, Ms. Rempel Garner, if the question was asked, and it was.

Even though I get that Mr. Fisher indicated that it's probably not the right protocol, it's just as right a protocol to have a response because we just went back into it with Mr. Fisher's comments. I think it's appropriate then for Ms. Rempel Garner to ask him a question as well and to get a reasonable answer, given that he is part of the government that's setting its work agenda.

Thank you.

• (1920)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Maguire.

Ms. Rempel Garner was called upon to answer a question on a point of information for Mr. Fisher, not to ask her own questions.

We'll carry on with Mr. Fisher.

Go ahead, please.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I challenge your ruling, Chair.

I kind of feel like as a woman I get cut off a lot, and I kind of feel like this is slightly misogynistic.

I challenge your ruling on the ability for me not to speak in response to a colleague's question.

**The Chair:** I guess that's appropriate.

Mr. Clerk, is it appropriate to challenge such a ruling?

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** I could just move an amendment, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** At this point, we have a—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** It's on the floor.

**The Chair:** —possible appeal of a ruling.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean-François Pagé):** She has appealed a ruling by the chair, so, yes, she can do it.

**The Chair:** Very well. Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?

Mr. Clerk, would you call the roll, please?

(Ruling of the chair overturned: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner, you may continue with your response.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you to my colleagues for letting me speak. It's nice. Thank you.

Thank you to Mr. Thériault and Mr. Davies. I appreciate it.

In response to Mr. Fisher's question, as he is the parliamentary secretary and he is responsible for setting the government's legislative agenda, or assisting in that with regard to health, I would ask him if he feels that four meetings, including a two-hour meeting with the ministers, is adequate for the committee to dispense with issues that are being raised by provincial governments. For example, what is the vaccine delivery schedule? The Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board raised on CTV today that he didn't know...or he presented erroneous information that perhaps the government was banking on the AstraZeneca vaccine being approved, or Johnson & Johnson's. Is it adequate to have vaccine manufacturers come before committee to discuss terms of contracts?

To answer my colleague's question, the Standing Order 106(4) procedure allows the committee to determine different meetings. The ministers are being asked to come here under the auspices of the emergency situation that Canada is facing. I would like to have the ministers come here as soon as possible. The chair can determine what date that is within the bounds of the motion. I would ask my colleague whether he feels that we should limit debate on procuring vaccines, which is possibly the only way out of one of the greatest public policy challenges that Canada has faced in some time.

I'll let the Liberals and the parliamentary secretary—the government rep—determine or perhaps answer that question. Does the party feel that we should be limiting debate on vaccines at this particular juncture in our nation's history?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Mr. Fisher, you still have the floor. Please go ahead.

• (1925)

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for that clarification, Ms. Rempel Garner.

I will move an amendment to one of the points in your motion, Ms. Rempel Garner.

After “invite the Minister of Health”, I move to amend the line as follows: “the Minister of Procurement and their officials to appear before the committee for no less than two hours each regarding all matters related to Canada’s COVID-19 vaccination strategy as the committee’s first witnesses on the topic of vaccines, with the number of committee meetings to be determined by unanimous consent, and that this meeting occur no later than February 4, 2021”.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

We have an amendment on the floor. Is there any discussion on the amendment?

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** I will speak to the amendment for just a second.

It’s a good motion, but I think that this gives the motion a little bit of clarity. It also gives an opening to allow us to have a conversation as a group and as a committee on how many meetings we want to have, rather than have a particular member from a particular party make the decision on how many meetings we would have.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

Once again we have an amendment on the floor. Is there any discussion on this amendment?

I have a number of hands raised. I expect they are raised in regard to the original motion.

We have Mr. Kelloway.

Did you wish to speak on this particular amendment?

**Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** It was so long ago.

I think I’ll forgo it for another time, other than to say... We’ve all said this because we live it. Our constituents live it. We have family members who are living in it and people who are separated because of it. I don’t know of anybody in my short time in Parliament who puts party before country. My hope is that we can stop that verbiage because it’s not accurate for anybody in any party.

When it comes to having the ministers come, I like the idea of having them come at the same time. A lot of times when we’ve had ministers on separate occasions, we get to ask a question, but because that minister is not there it goes back to staffers. To look at the key ministers in question at the same time—and sooner rather than later—is important to every parliamentarian and every Canadian. That’s why we’re here. It’s a good and important discussion to have.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Van Bynen, did you wish to speak to the amendment?

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Could I hear the amendment one more time?

**The Chair:** Sure.

Mr. Fisher, would you mind restating the amendment?

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Sure. Thank you.

It is that we invite the Minister of Health, the Minister of Procurement and their officials to appear before the committee for no less than two hours each regarding all matters related to Canada’s COVID-19 vaccination strategy as the committee’s first witnesses on the topic of vaccines and that the committee determine how many meetings we would hold on that topic, and that this meeting occur no later than February 4, 2021.

**The Chair:** You mentioned in your original amendment that such a vote would have to be unanimous. Is that correct?

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** That’s right, as per Mr. Davies.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** I, for one, am eager to see the ministers come forward because it’s important for us to be updated on that part. I share the sense of urgency that’s being expressed. I’m sure that the ministers are eager to have this conversation and to bring us up to date.

I don’t agree with the statement that we should act in the best interests of our constituents. I believe that each and every one of us acts in the best interests of our constituents. That goes well beyond any party line. I don’t agree with that statement. I don’t think that statement should be permitted to stand without being challenged.

I will be supporting this amendment.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Van Bynen.

Ms. Sidhu, please.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly support the amendment as moved by my colleague, Mr. Fisher.

I would also like to comment on the matter we are discussing today later on, but I have absolutely no issue with the ministers reporting to our committee. We all want to hear from our ministers about the hard work that they are doing for Canadians.

• (1930)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Sidhu.

Dr. Powlowski, go ahead please.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Thank you.

Yes, I support the amendment.

This is one of a number of amendments that basically come down to this: We do mental health on Friday and on Monday we start the vaccine study by calling the two ministers. That’s it. That’s all our amendments amount to. It’s nothing more complicated. We don’t have to drag this out. You’re starting to make me look back with regret to my work in emergency rooms doing fecal disimpactions. I prefer doing that to the procedural wrangling over this kind of stuff, which goes on and on.

This is simple. If you guys really want to come to an agreement, we're just asking.... Our amendments are small. If you're really interested in co-operating and getting this done, we totally agree that vaccines are the number one issue facing the country right now. We should be studying it. We should be in the substance of it, not arguing over procedural things.

Our suggested amendments, which are meant to make this consistent with the House motion, are relatively minor. We just finished the mental health study. We can start the vaccine study. The ministers are part of the vaccine study. It's not more complicated than that.

If we really want agreement, let's do it. Then let's go home and get back to our families.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** Mr. Chair, I didn't want to interrupt my friend Mr. Powlowski's impassioned remarks. However, I must let you know that there was no interpretation. This evening, I want the interpretation issue resolved once and for all, because it's ridiculous.

**The Chair:** Mr. Thériault, I'm sorry that there's an interpretation issue.

[*English*]

It's not something I can solve immediately. It's a problem that we will have to work out over time. Please feel free to intervene at any point when you are not getting translation. I apologize for that.

We will continue now with Ms. Rempel Garner, please.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I'm waiting to speak to the main motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll move to Mr. Davies, please.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Thank you.

Thanks to everybody for their interventions. I have great respect for all of my colleagues, particularly Dr. Powlowski. I share so much of his perspective, but I do have a couple of small disagreements with his last comment that I think are important.

From a structural point of view, it's been said that time is the most valuable currency in Parliament—I guess next to majority votes. Generally, government is going to win the votes at the end of the day in a majority, but in the opposition, we have time.

I'm going to point this out again. The Liberals hold the chair in this committee. If they had come before this committee with a nice schedule for the next four weeks, they would have been able to propose all sorts of things, including starting the COVID study on Monday and proposing that their witnesses, whom they're entitled to have first, would be the ministers. However, they didn't do that, so we're left here with the vacuum that Michelle Rempel Garner has filled.

The issue here is that a meeting under Standing Order 106(4) is an extraordinary meeting. That's the motion here today. This isn't a motion to schedule the first meeting of the COVID study and to allocate the witnesses. It's to have an extraordinary meeting with the

ministers. That's over and above anything else we're doing here. If the Liberals wanted the ministers to be the first witnesses in four meetings, they could have and should have moved that. They're now moving it as an amendment to this main motion. They are effectively making the ministers everybody's witnesses, which is contrary to the main motion that we passed in the House of Commons.

I agree with Dr. Powlowski that there's a very simple fix here. If we really care about the urgency, which we all do, and we want to quit getting mired in procedural wrangling, here's the answer. We schedule the fourth meeting on mental health for Friday. On Monday, we hold the first meeting on the COVID vaccines. We get our witnesses in by this Wednesday, and we call the ministers for the following Friday. That's not one of the four meetings of the vaccine study. That's the extraordinary S.O. 106(4) meeting.

I would like to illustrate why that wouldn't work. When the ministers come—I don't know who said this, maybe the chair said this, or maybe it was Mr. Fisher who said this—the ministers are not anybody's witnesses in particular. They are the ministers. That's why they don't come with other witnesses. It's why they come with staff. It's a separate kind of meeting that is conducted out of respect, and in consideration of the special role they occupy. They're not just any other witnesses. They're the ministers who are in charge of things.

That's entirely different from the four meetings that I'm envisioning on vaccines, where we're calling scientists, epidemiologists, emergency room doctors, infectious disease specialists, maybe Pfizer, and people who can tell us things with regard to COVID. I am adamantly against wasting one of our four special meetings on COVID, when we should be hearing from Canadian stakeholders who we normally don't hear from.

In terms of ease, I could turn this around on the comments that were just made. What's the problem with having five meetings on vaccines? Are we really wasting time worrying about that? No. I see Mr. Fisher shaking his head no. We all agree with that. Let's just get down with it. Let's get this done and finish off that important mental health aspect that Mr. Van Bynen championed on Friday. Let's start COVID vaccines on Monday, with each of us with our one witness, in congruence with our original motion. Let's get the ministers here on the following Friday.

The other reason the ministers should come the following Friday is that it gives them more time. Every time we call the ministers, we are made aware of how tight their schedules are, and I respect that. You want to give the ministers as much time as possible to rearrange their very busy schedules. By giving them next Friday, that gives them almost two weeks to get ready to come to committee.

● (1935)

I think what I just said is a compromise that meets everybody's objectives. We should just pass it and get on with it.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Davies.

We will go now to Mr. Maguire.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Like others, I am waiting for the first motion, Mr. Chair. You can move on.

**The Chair:** Ms. Sidhu, you are next, please.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Mr. Chair, I want to speak to the main motion.

**The Chair:** Very well.

Mr. Kelloway, I have you on the list next, or are you there for the main motion?

**Mr. Mike Kelloway:** No. I just wanted to reiterate....

Don, thank you. I think if we have four meetings on vaccines and we have the ministers separate from that, it makes all the sense in the world. We're here to ask questions, learn more and find out how to enhance what we're doing and do it better. We need to know where those gaps may be and why they're there. That's what good parliamentarians do, as I've studied in my green book and learned from you folks. It's what I see every day when we meet on this panel.

If we can get to that and, as Don said, look at mental health.... We need to finish that. That's important. Many, if not all of us on this Zoom, have talked either here or on social media about how important mental health is. It's important to us. Let's finish that. Then let's move on to the vaccines and find a time the ministers can come that is outside the parameters of the four meetings dedicated to vaccines. It seems as if there's common ground there. My hope is that we can get to that ASAP.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kelloway.

Dr. Powlowski is next again. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski:** I'm fine with Don's suggestion that this not be one of the meetings on vaccines. That's consistent with the amended motion. We don't determine the number of meetings we're going to accord to vaccines, so I think that is consistent with the amendments. I'm fine with five meetings on that subject.

I support the amendment in that I think it's consistent.... Well, hold on. It is inconsistent with the amended version. I agree with Don. I guess we're going to have to vote against our own amendment, then, if we're going to agree on that.

• (1940)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Dr. Powlowski.

Next we have Mr. Fisher again.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was really trying to find a way forward. Don again came up with a good suggestion that the committee is amenable to, and that's what's most important. I will support my motion because I put it on the floor, but I am content with moving in the direction that was outlined by Mr. Davies.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

Monsieur d'Entremont, do you wish to speak to the amendment or to the main motion?

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC):** I wish to speak to the main motion, please.

**The Chair:** Mr. Van Bynen, do you wish to speak to the amendment or the main motion?

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** I wish to speak to the amendment.

Just to clarify and move things on, shortly after the reference to "by unanimous consent", I would add "which is hereby provided". That way, we consent to the extra day. We acknowledge that with five meetings, the extra meeting is there, and we provide the consent. I would just say let's move on, as everybody is eager to do, with this portion.

**The Chair:** The suggestion you make to add that would require a subamendment. However, I think it would be incongruous to have a motion that requires only majority support to attempt to establish that unanimous consent has been achieved. Unless you wish to move that subamendment, we will carry on.

Hearing nothing, is there anyone who wishes to speak further to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will ask the clerk to call the vote on Mr. Fisher's amendment.

(Amendment negated: nays 6; yeas 4)

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

Mr. Fisher's amendment does not carry. We will carry on with the main motion.

Ms. Rempel Garner, I believe you're next.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Yes, I believe I am going to cede the floor to my colleague, Mr. d'Entremont.

**The Chair:** Very well.

Monsieur d'Entremont, please go ahead.

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** Thank you.

There are a couple of updates we'd like to have changed within the motion. If you'll indulge me, I think Don brought these up as well. We're all following what Mr. Davies brought forward as well.

In the second paragraph, "That in accordance with a motion previously passed by the committee", I think they put in a date of February 1 to do the final meeting on mental health. Rather than doing that, why don't we bump that to January 29 so that we can get the mental health study out of the way? That would require that change and I think it's actually referred to further down in the fourth paragraph as well as February 1.

I move that we change the date of February 1 to January 29.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. d'Entremont.

We have an amendment on the floor to change the date of the second point of Ms. Rempel Garner's motion to January 29.

Is there any discussion on this amendment?

We have a bunch of hands raised among the participants but I think they're all there for the main motion. For this amendment, I wonder if you could just wave at us on camera and we'll see if there is anybody who wishes to intervene on this amendment. Seeing none, I think we can go to the vote.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

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

Thank you, Monsieur d'Entremont.

We go back now to the main motion and I have next on the list, Ms. Sidhu.

Ms. Sidhu, please go ahead.

• (1945)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I have one observation, Mr. Chair. Earlier in our discussion, in politely permitting a colleague to provide a procedural answer, you were accused of misogyny, as another colleague tried to score a political point. Both Mr. Chair and Mr. Fisher were extremely polite, and I call on all members to be respectful and not to accuse each other of misogyny, even lightly. It is not the first time such accusations have been made. I urge my colleagues to please be respectful. This is a committee where we are working hard for Canadians.

The other thing, Mr. Chair—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I have a point of order, Chair, on decorum.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Mr. Chair, can I—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Ms. Sidhu. Ms. Rempel Garner has the floor on a point of order.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** On decorum, I would like to point out, Chair, that misogyny is experienced through lived experience. As a woman being shut down at committee when I was asked a direct question, having it be said that I wasn't being reasonable or not being polite is often a tool of misogyny. Being unreasonable is often an excuse used to silence women, so my lived experience should not be invalidated by a colleague.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Ms. Sidhu, please continue.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Mr. Chair, we all know Mr. Fisher was polite, as were you. Everyone noticed that, and that is why I made that request. I urge committee members to be respectful of each other.

The other point I want to make is with regard to the previous comment about long-term care. In Ontario, I know that in my riding, families and staff are worried about how long-term care is being administered by the province. As LTC, home care and vaccine distribution are under provincial jurisdiction, that is why we provided over \$1 billion to the provinces and territories to support them.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that as of January 21, we have delivered over one million vaccine doses to the provinces and territories for them to administer. By September, we will have procured the highest number of doses per capita in the world of what

Ms. Rempel Garner called the hottest commodity in the world right now. This is a delay in delivery, not a delay in ordering the vaccine. Additionally, no other countries have released their week-to-week delivery schedules. We did. Perhaps the opposition missed this point. Let's work hard in this committee.

We were unanimous in wanting to hear from our ministers, and my constituents want to hear from our ministers. There's no problem. We can schedule the mental health study and the vaccines. Mr. Fraser made the point that we can have five or four meetings if we wish—

• (1950)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, but there hasn't been any interpretation for the past three or four sentences.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Could we check for translation? Is there translation now? Is there perhaps a problem with Ms. Sidhu's microphone?

Ms. Sidhu, could you raise your microphone?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** You should ask the interpreters to do so, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I would ask Ms. Sidhu to speak again, and the interpreters could advise whether or not they're able to continue the translation.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** It is a very important issue, Mr. Chair. Do you have translation now? Do you want me to repeat everything?

**The Chair:** You seem to be good to go, so please carry on. I don't think you need to repeat everything, but you could finish up and we will carry on.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** The last point I made was that we all want to hear from the ministers at committee. My constituents want to hear from our ministers. We don't have any issue with that. As Mr. Fisher suggested, now we are all unanimously thinking about five meetings, including the ministers. There's no problem at all. Let's work together, and let's do more hard work for all Canadians.

Regarding the misogyny comment I made, let's be respectful of each other.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Sidhu.

I have Ms. Rempel Garner next.

Please go ahead.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I'm good on the main motion.

**The Chair:** Great.

Mr. Davies, please go ahead. You're next.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Thank you.

To make everything congruent, I think the final paragraph has to be amended to reflect that the vaccine component of our study will begin on Monday, February 1. I think it presently says February 5.

I'm not going to propose the language, but that last paragraph needs to be amended to make it clear that we start COVID on the 5th, we call the ministers on the 5th and that is a separate meeting from the four meetings we agreed to have on vaccines.

I sense that's what everybody wants and there's agreement on that. If the clerk can make those amendments to reflect the will of the committee, I think we can then vote on it, but I don't think it reads that way yet.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Davies.

Mr. Clerk, are you comfortable with receiving the amendment in this form?

**The Clerk:** Yes. I will review the blues tomorrow and I will do the minutes accordingly.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Is everyone clear on Mr. Davies' amendment?

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Mr. Chair, I would speak to that.

I guess we will probably vote on this first, but I would also like to make a slight [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

**The Chair:** Mr. Maguire, you're on mute. I missed the word after "slight".

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Sorry, I don't know what happened there.

After we discuss Mr. Davies' motion, I would like to make a short amendment to clarify the issue of the four meetings plus the ministers.

**The Chair:** Okay. Leave your hand up there on the participants panel and we will come to you as soon as we're done with this amendment.

Is there any further intervention on Mr. Davies' amendment?

Seeing no indication of interest to speak on this, I will ask the clerk to conduct a vote on this amendment.

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

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Maguire, please go ahead.

• (1955)

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think we've agreed to this mostly, but I want to make an amendment that the meeting with the ministers' appearance, outlined in paragraph one, not be included as part of the four meetings that are allocated to the theme on vaccines.

I agree with Mr. Davies and others who have had this discussion already and want to make sure we had that as part of the motion to clarify it.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clerk, are you comfortable with receiving the amendment as stated?

**The Clerk:** I'm always comfortable, so yes.

**The Chair:** Is the committee clear on the amendment? Is there any discussion on the amendment?

I have Mr. Davies' hand up on the side panel.

Do you wish to speak to this amendment?

**Mr. Don Davies:** Yes. Briefly, I'm happy to support it, but to be frank, I thought it was part of my motion.

To be really clear, what I think we're agreeing to is that Friday is mental health and Monday is the first day of our COVID component, of which we're going to have four vaccine meetings. That's the first one. We have our witnesses to get in by this Wednesday. We're having the ministers come next Friday, and that does not count as one of the four vaccine meetings. That means that we'll schedule three other vaccine meetings after Monday.

The only reason I point that out to Mr. Maguire is that it was part of my motion. If it's helpful to clarify and it requires another amendment, then I'm happy. I think we have to all be on the same page on this.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Davies.

Mr. Maguire, are you comfortable with that, and if so, do you wish to withdraw your amendment? Otherwise, we will carry on and vote on your amendment.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** That's fine. I certainly appreciated Mr. Davies bringing forth the change to the February 1 date as well. I would just like to vote on it for clarity.

**The Chair:** No problem.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I appreciate Mr. Davies' comments, for sure.

**The Chair:** No problem. The amendment is still on the floor.

I have Ms. Rempel Garner next. Do you wish to speak to this amendment?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Yes, thank you, Chair.

Perhaps Mr. Davies will get the floor again.

I just wanted to ensure that when we are amending this, we're not inadvertently creating a loophole for the ministers to give notice to the committee that, let's say, they're not available on that particular date so they don't come.

The spirit of the original motion was to say by next Friday, and then, Chair, you have the prerogative to work with the ministers. I mean, I'll meet at two in the morning if that's when they're available, but what I don't want to see happen is for us to give a prescriptive date in terms of the exact date that they have to be here, and then they say, "Oh, you know, I have to tie my shoes or wash my hair that day" and then they don't come. We've had this problem in our committee before.

I'd like to just say "by that date" and then leave it up to you to find time within that particular schedule. I don't want to see us having to use Standing Order 106(4) in this committee again and compelling them to come over the break week. I don't think that is something that anybody wants here, but it's something that we probably will have to do if we're getting the sense that they're not willing to appear next week.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

I should advise the committee that our ability to hold meetings depends on the availability of House resources, but it also is subject to the schedules of the ministers. We cannot, in fact, compel them to attend. We can invite, as the motion suggests, but we cannot compel.

We will go now to Mr. Kelloway.

**Mr. Mike Kelloway:** I'll just very quickly support having the ministers by next Friday. It seems reasonable, regardless of what the ministers may be doing, whether they're in the gym or reading a book, I'm sure they'll make the time. Of course they'll make the time to be there. They are the ministers of the two portfolios that are critical. They will no doubt be there and I'll make the strong assumption they will be. I think next Friday seems reasonable.

• (2000)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kelloway.

Is there any further intervention or further discussion on Mr. Maguire's amendment?

Seeing none, I'll ask the clerk to conduct the vote on Mr. Maguire's amendment.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**The Chair:** We will go back to the main motion as multiply amended. Is there any further discussion on the main motion?

Mr. Davies, go ahead.

**Mr. Don Davies:** I just wanted to clarify. I've heard everybody say something correct about this, but we probably should be, just for the sake of clarity.... I think Mr. Kelloway was bang-on, but Ms. Rempel Garner's point is accurate and yours too, Mr. Chair.

We can't force the ministers to come, of course, but when we invite them to come a week Friday, I think the motion should be clear, Mr. Chair, that you have the ability or the discretion to schedule them any time up to Friday if that suits their calendars. I think

you should invite them for next Friday and if they can make it, that's great. If it's more convenient for them to come on a day prior to that, then you should have the discretion to set down that meeting prior to that. I thought we should clarify that for the motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Did you wish to make an amendment as such? I should point out that the chair already has that kind of discretion, but I would also suggest that if we're too prescriptive, if we require that it be done before such a date and they're not available, it leaves it open for after that date. I would suggest that we want to be able to invite them at such time as they're able to come.

Mr. Davies, did you wish to carry on with your intervention?

**Mr. Don Davies:** Those remarks leave me somewhat less certain. I know it's a bit odd, because we're trying to schedule our meetings and we're trying to have the ministers come on a set date that we can't actually compel, but I'm prepared to operate in good faith that what the motion means is that we want you to invite them to come next Friday and hopefully they will come. If not, then the next option would be that they come at a time prior to that, and if they can't, then I guess we would want them to come as soon as possible thereafter.

**The Chair:** I certainly take that as implicit. That's what my desire would be, but I caution about the motion being overly specific. That's what I'm saying.

Is there any further intervention?

Ms. Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Chair, I would just say that motions with dates for ministers' appearances are fairly routine and I wouldn't describe them as overly prescriptive.

I'll just be blunt. I would say "by next Friday". That gives the ministers, in the middle of a pandemic where people are dying every day and we don't have vaccines, two weeks to come before the Standing Committee on Health. If we get the sense as committee members that is not going to be the case, that they won't be able to fulfill that basic parliamentary function, then I suspect there will probably be some ramifications from the opposition on that.

I would encourage you in your role of chair to perhaps communicate that to the ministers in terms of their understanding of what the gravity of this invitation would be, should it pass.

• (2005)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner. I can assure you that in my role as chair and as a parliamentarian I certainly will always stress to the ministers how important their interventions are, and I am totally confident that they themselves know as well. However, my point wasn't the specification of a given date, but about making it too prescriptive and requiring that it be only before that date and not allow that it might have to be after. I'm certainly willing to schedule the meeting whenever the motion requires, and certainly we'll try to do so in an expeditious and proactive manner.

Mr. Maguire, please go ahead.



**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thank you. I just want to add, for my Liberal colleagues who have indicated the importance of this issue, that I think it's already in the original motion that it occur no later than February 5, 2021, and there are an awful lot of two-hour periods between now and then. Whatever time it can be scheduled in that period of time, I'm fine with as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Is there any further discussion on the main motion as multiply amended?

Seeing none, I will ask the clerk to conduct the vote on the motion as multiply amended.

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

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

Thank you all. I would remind everyone that we have the final meeting on mental health on Friday. I believe we are missing witnesses from the Conservatives, and possibly from the Bloc.

Mr. Davies, we may be missing one of your witnesses as well. I would certainly advise you to get those witness requests in as soon as possible so that they can be approached and brought up to speed on the technology in time for the meeting.

That being said, the business of the meeting is concluded. I thank you all.

The meeting is adjourned.

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