



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri- Food

AGRI • NUMBER 001 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, November 14, 2007

—
Chair

Mr. James Bezan

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Wednesday, November 14, 2007

•(1535)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean-François Lafleur): Good afternoon, everybody.

Honourable members of the committee, I see an obvious quorum.

[Translation]

We can now proceed with the election of a Chair. I am ready to receive motions for the position of Chair.

[English]

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions and cannot entertain points of order, nor participate in debate, of course.

Right now I am ready to proceed with the election of the chair.

Are there any motions?

Mr. Miller, you have a motion for the chair?

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Yes, I nominate James Bezan.

[Translation]

The Clerk: Thank you, are there any other motions? No.

[English]

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried, and Mr. Bezan duly elected chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: Before inviting Mr. Bezan to take the chair, if the committee wishes, we will proceed to the election of the vice-chairs.

I am now ready to receive motions for first vice-chair, from the official opposition.

Mr. St. Amand.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): I am pleased to nominate my colleague, Mr. Paul Steckle.

The Clerk: Thank you.

It has been moved that Mr. Steckle be the first vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

The Clerk: I will now proceed with the election of the second vice-chair from an opposition party other than the official opposition. I am now ready to receive motions for this position.

Mr. Roy.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): I nominate Mr. Bellavance.

The Clerk: It is moved by Mr. Roy that Mr. Bellavance be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any other motions?

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

(Motion agreed to)

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

[English]

I will now invite Mr. Bezan to take the chair, please.

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): Thank you for re-electing me as chair.

I'm looking forward to working with my vice-chairs, of course. We had a fairly productive last session, and I'm looking forward to this session being even more productive as we continue to deal with the issues we're all concerned about and care deeply about, and those concern our farm base across this country from ocean to ocean.

The thing next we need to do is to go through routine motions. We do have some motions that we need to....

Do we need to circulate these?

•(1540)

The Clerk: Yes, if it's not already been done.

The Chair: We've worked on a few ourselves.

Can we get these circulated as well?

The Clerk: Sure.

- _____ (Pause) _____
-

The Chair: We've got to go through these routine motions so that we have a proper procedure established for our committee meetings. We have a copy of the routine motions circulated by the clerk, and I've made a few proposals or amendments to those so that things, in my opinion, would run a little bit better.

The first one is on the services of analysts from the Library of Parliament. It is that the committee retain the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament.

Do you have a question?

Mr. Larry Miller: Do we need a motion in order to discuss this, Mr. Chairman? Procedurally, do we need a motion to put this whole document on the table for discussion, or do we deal with these individually?

The Chair: We'll deal with each one as we go through it.

Mr. Larry Miller: Okay, that's fine.

The Chair: If you want to deal with it all in one motion, we can, but I think it's better for debate that we do it one by one.

Go ahead, Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Chair, if you are moving the change, could you explain the effect of the language change that you're asking for in the first piece?

The Chair: I won't be moving these motions, because I'm the chair. They'll have to be moved by somebody other than me.

Go ahead, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Are we just dealing with the services of analysts from the Library of Parliament right now?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. David Anderson: Basically that's just to clean up the language a little bit, but it allows the committee to retain the services of analysts from the Library of Parliament. We thought the language was a little clearer, and services may be requested at the discretion of the chair. It's just to clean that up, so it's basically the same thing.

- (1545)

The Chair: Mr. Miller is next, and then Mr. Martin.

Mr. Larry Miller: I was just going to add that the only difference I really see, Pat, is that the services may be requested at the discretion of the chair. If something comes up, we don't actually have to have a meeting to have work done by them. To me, that's what seems to be the big change in it.

The Chair: Actually, it's just wordsmithing.

Go ahead, Pat.

Mr. Pat Martin: I don't think I'm entirely comfortable with it. I don't see the need for the change. Most other committees I've sat on do fine with just the standard language of the routine motions that were circulated first. I'm not sure I'm comfortable that the chair can arbitrarily commission the Library of Parliament to undertake a body of work without consulting with the committee.

The Chair: There's a little bit of jumbling around, but the big addition here is "to assist the committee in its work". That's added wording to the previous motion.

Mr. Steckle.

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): I feel similar to Pat in terms of when we say "These services may be requested at the discretion of the Chair". If you want to use that language, then it should be "but not limited to", because if we take it from what we had before, it was at the direction of the committee and including the chair. I think we were better to stay with what we had before rather than the new language, unless we add "but not limited to", and I don't think—

The Chair: The previous motion did read "at the discretion of the Chair".

Mr. Paul Steckle: That's right.

The Chair: That's the way it read before and that's the way it still reads in the new version. It's "at the discretion of the Chair". When you were chair it was at the discretion of the chair.

Mr. Paul Steckle: The same language we have now?

The Chair: Yes. I'll read the motion from the last session:

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

That's from May 4, 2006.

Mr. Paul Steckle: This is what we had in the last—

The Chair: The addition is "to assist the Committee in its work". That's added wording. That's the only difference: "to assist the Committee in its work". So it's directing...

Mr. Larry Miller: Instead of saying assist the committee's work it's saying assist the committee?

The Chair: It's just wordsmithing. Pretty much the intention is—

Mr. Paul Steckle: Is this document what we had in the previous session?

The Chair: That's similar.

Mr. Paul Steckle: Like we had in the previous session. This is the proposal put forward by you people. I had no problem with this one as it was in the last session, but I'm saying—

The Chair: Okay.

André Bellavance.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): As far as what was just proposed is concerned, you just told Paul that that was the way we operate.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: No, it's that one.

Mr. André Bellavance: I'm sorry. Do you want us to consider all of the proposals on this sheet and comment on them?

[English]

The Chair: Yes, we need to pass these motions one at a time to establish the standing orders of the committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: I see.

I'm also wondering about the first one. I don't know how things used to be, but it states that it's solely at the chair's discretion, whereas I thought it was up to the committee to decide.

[*English*]

The Chair: It's always been at the discretion of the chair. That's the standard for all committees, all standing orders, and that's the one that's coming forward. The one that we passed in the last session said it's "at the discretion of the Chair". That is not new language. Ultimately, it is the chair who works with the researchers and staff and the clerk to organize the work of the committee.

Mr. Paul Steckle: I would move the approval of the—

The Chair: We have a motion on the table from Mr. Anderson that the proposal....

David.

Mr. David Anderson: I want to just make the point that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs adopted basically the language that we're suggesting. I can read it to you. Mr. Proulx made the motion:

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.

So rather than two sentences there's just one there, but that is the wording that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs adopted.

The Chair: We're splitting hairs here. We do have a motion on the table.

Is there any further question or debate?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Okay, subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): I think I'd like to support the new version of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. I think it's more representative of the makeup of Parliament and I think it would be advisable to—

• (1550)

The Chair: Could you read it into the record just so everybody knows what's going on and what we're dealing with? We do have two documents in front of us.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Okay. It reads:

That the Sub-Committee on Agenda and Procedure be composed of the Chair, the two Vice-Chairs, one member of the NDP and one additional member from the Conservatives. Quorum of the Sub-committee shall consist of at least three (3) members one of whom must be from the government. Each member of the subcommittee shall be permitted to have one assistant attend at any meetings of the Sub-Committee on Agenda and Procedure.

I think it just better reflects the makeup of this committee and the makeup of Parliament.

The Chair: I had Ken first and then André.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I had been under the impression that we were going to go from four members to six members, including the parliamentary secretary, so I'm relieved to not see that in there.

Nonetheless, in terms of the four-member working group, I'm not aware of any problems historically or that this committee encountered in the past year because of it. I would be quite in favour of retaining the existing sentence as it reads with regard to the subcommittee on agenda and procedure, with the chair, two vice-chairs, and a member of the other opposition party.

The Chair: Just for the sake of information—before I give André the floor—I can tell you that it puts me, as chair, in kind of an uncomfortable position of being the chair of the committee and also trying to advocate the government's position.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: I will not accept your resignation at this time, sorry.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I'm just saying that's the reason. If I'm to be working here on an impartial basis, the government members should have somebody there advocating their agenda.

Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: I must say, James, that we don't really feel for you on this because we know full well that you are also a government member. When the steering committee sits, clearly you're in a position to put forward the Conservative Party's point of view, because you're a member of that party. I agree entirely with Ken. In my opinion, the steering committee has always worked just fine as it is, and I sat on it the whole of the last session. I don't think that there were issues or frictions in the steering committee, on the contrary. We have always got along very well. What's more, whenever there was the slightest problem to be dealt with in committee, if you weren't comfortable, David often was, and he was able to get the government's point of view across.

That's why I agree we should keep the steering committee like it was before.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Miller, then Mr. Martin.

Mr. Larry Miller: I certainly wasn't at any steering committee meetings, because I wasn't on it, and I'm not aware of any problems. But I do know, having chaired a number of things over the years, that it does put the chair in a very....

Basically, a chair most of the time doesn't speak to a motion or an issue. They're there to keep order and to see that the meeting carries on. If you want the chair to do that, basically it takes them away from the other.

The only fear that I would see that the opposition parties would have is if they were outnumbered. The opposition parties still outnumber, if this proposal were in place, the government.

I just think it would make the job easier for the chair. It's not going to necessarily gain us anything, if you look at it from that point.

The Chair: Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: The only question I have, James, is that for quorum it says at least three members, one of whom shall be from the government. Does that include the chair?

The Chair: I believe so, yes.

Mr. Pat Martin: So you would contemplate the chair and two other members; you would count as the government side, then, in that case.

The Chair: As it does here now.

Mr. Pat Martin: Then the other question I have is that in this committee, does all the work of the planning committee have to be brought back to the main committee to be ratified?

The Chair: We actually don't put it into a motion. We do allow our agenda to be somewhat flexible, because issues pop up and arise from time to time. We do bring back what's recommended so that everybody sees the working plan we lay out for a session, and then we start moving ahead with it. But we never have to put it into a formal motion.

Mr. Steckle.

Mr. Paul Steckle: We've had various sorts of steering committees. As chair a number of years ago, I know that we had a committee of the whole serve as the steering committee. So we had the whole committee meet to do its planning, and that worked reasonably well.

The Chair: That's always an option—

Mr. Paul Steckle: It isn't a problem. Basically what we do at steering is simply look at future business and each bring our concerns. The chair has as much right as the other members have. It's an open meeting. We don't have the mikes on, as we do at these kinds of meetings. It's pretty freewheeling. We bring our issues to the table and we work together as a group. It's not done in a formal way, not like this kind of meeting.

So I see nothing wrong with the previous structure as we had it, and I would see nothing wrong with the chair bringing forward his or her ideas in terms of where the direction of the committee should go.

• (1555)

The Chair: Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: Well, our preference is that we have that additional member, but if the opposition can assure us that they're not concerned about the chair bringing forward issues from the government side, so that he's not in the position where he's supposed to be neutral while chairing the meeting at the same time as having to deal with the issues, then we can live with that, I think.

Mr. Paul Steckle: But ultimately, it has to go back to the full committee, where we look at what our future business is. And I have never seen that agenda that we set being the final word on it, as you well know.

We've had many changes to the agenda as we go forward, but it's at least putting it on the table so we have something to go from.

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I'd just like to build on what Larry and David said. I think that committees are supposed to be reflective. When we look around at this table right now, we have a chair that's impartial, we have the opposition, we have members of government. Well, if we struck this committee with three members, for all intents and purposes, we don't have a representative from the government. It's pretty obvious if we remove the members of the government here, and he's the chair there, yes, he is a Conservative, but nevertheless as a chair, he's supposed to remain as impartial as possible.

So I would like to have the opportunity, or one of my colleagues, to be able to put forth ideas from this side of the table, as well as from that side. Like Larry said, you're not prejudicing your chances at all.

The Chair: Paul.

Mr. Paul Steckle: If I may, and to tell you, Mr. Lauzon, if that argument of yours then holds, then the chair is really neutered.

The Chair: I don't want to be neutered.

Mr. Paul Steckle: No, but basically with the argument you're making, what you're really saying is you want a voice at the table for the Conservative Party, and that's fairly said. I don't have any problem with that.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Yes, I think we need a legitimate voice.

Mr. Paul Steckle: I'm prepared, as a member of this impartial group, when we get together to put our things on the table, to allow the chair to do that. But you're suggesting he should not be allowed to bring forward his issues, only you or someone else from your side should do that, and I don't think that's fair.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Well, how is he going to call you or me or anyone else out of order, if he's lobbying for the government?

Mr. Paul Steckle: We don't get out of order.

The Chair: We're all for that.

André.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance: Mr. Chairman, I simply wanted to point out to Mr. Lauzon that at the steering committee our discussions never degenerated to the point where you had to call for order. In fact, we've always had informal and constructive discussions.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. Any other discussion?

We have a motion on the floor, the motion being the one that was proposed by Guy.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: I have a point of order: that should the proposal fail, then the existing resolution would stand.

The Chair: I'll put it on the floor. Nothing stands right now. Everything has to come back.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Okay, all right. Thank you.

The Chair: The question.

(Motion negated)

The Chair: Mr. Boshcoff.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Then I would propose the previous subcommittee on agenda and procedure's resolution: that the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be established and be composed of the chair, the two vice-chairs, and a member of the other opposition party.

The Chair: Okay. Any comments on that? We've had plenty of discussion already.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Okay, a reduced quorum. Does somebody want it moved?

Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: On the proposed addition, so from the words "In the case of previously scheduled meetings taking place outside the Parliamentary Precinct", I'd like someone to explain to me in what time and situation we would be required to do things any other way when outside the Parliament Precinct.

Perhaps they're referring to witnesses having to travel, which was the case in our last session's tour, and perhaps they're afraid the witnesses will be insulted because, for example, some members are absent. As a member of this committee, I've never been in a situation where there wasn't quorum, for example. Committee members are very disciplined. And that's why I don't think this addition is necessary.

When the committee travels, I want our way of doing things to be exactly the same as it is in Parliament.

•(1600)

[*English*]

The Chair: We actually need to put a motion on the floor first before we can all start discussion.

So does somebody want to...?

Larry, are you moving the reduced quorum motion?

Mr. Larry Miller: In our travelling—

The Chair: Are you moving the reduced quorum motion? We have to get a motion on the floor first before we can have debate.

Mr. Larry Miller: Certainly, yes. I'll move it to get it out there for discussion.

The Chair: Okay, and André already made his comments on it.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: What I was going to say, André, when we were touring back in the spring, and you were on that, there was one meeting one morning where one of the members of the travelling group was late for that meeting.

Now, it ended up we still had a quorum and we continued on, but in the event that more than that number ever happened.... Basically, you have your agenda set up with witnesses coming into those. If you didn't have a quorum, without this change, you could get yourself in a spot where your witnesses are sitting there and you can't proceed until somebody.... So to me it's a safeguard to that.

The Chair: For the sake of reference, I know of a case where the finance committee was travelling—this was a few years back—but the entire government at that time wasn't even at the meeting, they didn't have quorum, and despite that fact they still took evidence, even though it was against the standing orders. They did receive evidence, and I believe it ended up that one of the NDP members had to chair that meeting in Winnipeg.

Mr. St. Amand.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: I suppose I approach this, Mr. Chair, with "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". There may be an antiquated example of what you're talking about, and Larry has a near miss, but, frankly, I think the reduced quorum, as it always has been, is sufficient; that is, three members present, including one member of the opposition. Not that it would ever happen, but if I may, if all members of the government side, whatever the party in power, decided or were not able to make it, then the workings of the committee would be stalled because nobody from the government was present. I think the way it always has been is the route to proceed with, so I would speak against the revised motion of Mr. Miller.

The Chair: As a point of fact, before I let Mr. Roy speak, the last motion was five members for this committee: that the chair be authorized to hold meetings, receive and publish evidence, provided that at least five members are present. We had five. The motion was five for the last session. Even though the one presented here was three, that was put out as routine motions, opening a session, but as a committee we had five. We did get awful close when we were travelling. One day we were right at five.

I have Mr. Roy, Mr. Lauzon, Mr. Anderson, and then Mr. Hubbard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think that the rule as it stands in other committees is to have three people. The addition clearly violates the Standing Orders. If we were to adopt this motion, two parallel committees could then sit in the same city. The government members would sit in one room, and the opposition members in another.

Basically, you're saying in the motion that even if the government members aren't present the committee can still sit. The opposite would also be true. In other words, should the opposition members be absent the committee would also be able to sit. The problem is with the way the motion is worded. It doesn't make any sense.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm not sure why we'd want to do that.

A point of order, Mr. Hubbard.

Hon. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): We have two documents in front of us. I assumed that the one page one was the one we used last year, but you said it wasn't.

The Chair: It's not exactly to the motions that we actually carried from the minutes.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: Not exactly.

•(1605)

The Chair: Not 100%.

The only change was where it said “at least three” on the reduced quorum; it actually should be “at least five”.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: The old one said “at least five”.

May I ask further, who presented this one? Where did it come from?

The Chair: This is coming from the government.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: Mr. Anderson, as parliamentary secretary, has presented this one. And this is the one that the clerk has drawn up, is it?

The Chair: One is standard and the other one is what we're suggesting as a possibility in order to make sure that we don't run into any problems, so that procedure and the process for the committee is going to be as easy as possible.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: On the same point—

The Chair: I've got Mr.—

Hon. Charles Hubbard: Can't I ask a further point of order?

The Chair: Make sure it's a point of order and not a matter of debate.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: The one dealing with the subcommittee, many committees I've been on have always said that the parliamentary secretary—

The Chair: That's already been carried.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: I know it has, but I wondered if it was carried because it was written here. I'm wondering if this is the way it should have been. Is this the way it should have been, or is this something else like the three and five? Who changed that? That's what I'm having trouble with. Who has made the changes? Who has presented something—

The Chair: The one that we carried on the subcommittee was the one that was standard for the committee.

I don't think you have a point of order, because we're already there.

An hon. member: Yes, it is.

The Chair: Do you have a point of order?

Hon. Charles Hubbard: We have a very important point. Who is doing the damned changes? That's what I'd like to know.

The Chair: This one here is coming from the minutes of the last meeting, with one typo. It should have been “five” rather than “three”.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: You're assuring us today that there's only one typo on this whole thing in terms of last time—

The Chair: I believe so.

This is the standard one that we bring to committee every time, and the committee can adopt or change it. We are masters of our own destiny, and as a committee we can decide whatever we want to be the standing orders of the committee, Mr. Hubbard.

I have Mr. Bellavance on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: Actually, you just answered my question. You assure me that the double-sided sheet that was given to us lists

our committee's actual routine motions except for one mistake where there is reference made to three committee members which, in our case, according to you, is actually five. That is what I want to be sure about, because if it is a general document, as opposed to the actual procedures followed by this committee, there is going to be a problem. But if not, that is fine, and we can continue to work in the same way.

[*English*]

The Chair: This is the basic one that every committee works off of. The routine motions are the basics that the clerks bring forward to all committees to work off of.

For our committee I have the minutes of the last meeting in front of me as well. We made minor changes. If there are any from motion to motion, I will point them out if they're different from the minutes.

Agreed?

Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I think that's just a typo. Maybe the clerk can clarify this. There's a typo in this document, that the three should have read five.

The Chair: That was the decision of this committee last time, to increase it to five rather than three, and that's something that the agriculture committee has always done.

You still have the floor.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I was scheduled to speak.

I can't understand why there's so much controversy over this. Don't we want this committee...? Let's say, for example, if we want to get started at 3:30 and a couple of members are not here but the witnesses are here.... If we have three to four witnesses sometimes, I think it's advantageous to be able to get started. It just makes our life a lot simpler. I don't think it hurts anything. I think there's more upside than there is downside, and I can't understand why we're not embracing this.

The Chair: We have a list going here. We have Anderson, Hubbard, Bellavance, Storseth, and Miller.

David, you're up.

Mr. David Anderson: I want to make a point. In the second paragraph of the reduced quorum motion it is talking about previously scheduled meetings outside the parliamentary precinct. We're talking about travelling meetings, not about what might happen here. The only thing that they would be allowed to do is proceed to hear witnesses and receive evidence, so there isn't a possibility for the committee members who are present to do anything other than open up the meeting and begin to hear testimony and witnesses. The point of it is to avoid a situation where members are standing around and you don't have enough to proceed. I don't see that it would be a threat to anybody. I think it would be reasonable to support it. That's my view.

The Chair: That's the thing. The motion that's on the table is talking about three, but if we want to amend that to five, then it's equal to what we did before. This is just designating that if we are travelling and for whatever reasons people are called back—emergencies, whatever—and we fall below quorum, then instead of cancelling that committee meeting and not having those witnesses who are lined up to present, we allow them the chance to still present their evidence.

Next is Mr. Hubbard.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I had some of it clarified with who produced each one of these, but in the past—for example, one we already covered—usually the parliamentary secretary was the one on the standing committee. I don't know where he or she got lost out, but somewhere over the last few years you lost out that position in terms of being the government.

In terms of this one, I'm concerned with this particular aspect...

• (1610)

Mr. David Anderson: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, as parliamentary secretary, I was not on the subcommittee.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: No, but some years past it was automatic that we're part of the...but not now apparently.

The Chair: It has been for some time.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: I wasn't here at the time. I wasn't here at this point last year. I came into the committee later.

I am concerned, Mr. Chair, with the first paragraph:

...when a quorum is not present, provided that at least three members are present, including one member of the opposition and one member of the government.

That would be quite easy to have, but having one member of the government would be somewhat restrictive. In other words, three parties could be here, but the government members might be late, and nothing would happen. That gives me some concern.

The Chair: The second paragraph addresses that, saying if there's not quorum....

Hon. Charles Hubbard: The second paragraph says if we're outside Ottawa.

The Chair: That's true.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: But on the Hill....

The Chair: Mr. Anderson.

This had better be a point of order. Otherwise I have to go to Mr. Bellavance.

Mr. David Anderson: I was going to ask a question. The chair has to be here. So do we have to have a member of the government here?

The Chair: The vice-chair could take over a meeting if the chair is late.

Mr. Bellavance.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance: I just wanted to quickly answer Mr. Lauzon, who was asking, where the controversy lies and what the problem is with these motions.

Mr. Lauzon, my colleagues from other committees have told us that the government is trying to impose new rules on us from day one in the committee, without even giving us a head's up. You can see where the discussion has gone. Fortunately, I already had a similar document which was tabled in another committee; so, I am somewhat prepared. Now this is happening, and they are trying to shove it down our throats, that is what is controversial, and that is what the problem is.

Everyone agrees that this committee works very well. Some of my colleagues sit on other committees and sometimes I hear about them. Occasionally, I replace colleagues from other committees where things do not at all work in the same way.

So all these changes are pointless right now because our committee works well. In English, I think you say: "*If it ain't broke, don't fix it.*"

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Storseth.

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll pass. Mr. Anderson addressed my concerns.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: I want to go back to the comments Mr. Roy made about there being two separate meetings going on. That can't happen, because the way this reads, the government can't go ahead and have one without a member of the opposition present; the opposition can't go ahead and have one without.... So what's the problem?

The advantage I see here is this. I have sat in a lot of meetings in the last three and a half years, guys—some of you have been here and some haven't—in which half the presentations are through before everybody straggles in. Why the hell should we bring people here and waste our time sitting if we can't go ahead, get started, and let people present their evidence? That has happened.

The Chair: There's a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Mr. Chair, on a point of order.

If you read it properly, Mr. Miller, you would see what it says. I will read it to you in English:

[English]

“whether opposition or government members are present”.

[Translation]

That means that even if the government members are absent, the committee can still sit. It is written in the motion.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Anderson. You don't have...?

Okay. Mr. Boshcoff.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Mr. Chair, I take great umbrance at the suggestion that any members of this committee have been unnecessarily tardy, or consistently so, or that we can't get meetings.... It's really up to the chair, once the quorum is here, to start the meeting.

If, out of thoughtfulness, you've delayed meetings until more members have come, it's only because you've been considerate. There certainly has never been any suggestion that we've taken our time getting here. I believe this committee has worked very well and has been extremely punctual. So you'd better strike from the record any mention of that, because I'm very proud of my attendance in all these kinds of things.

When I look at these, I can only assume that because they're not based in fact, they're based in conjecture. I don't know if this is that 200-page document on obstruction, subverting, or obfuscation, or neutralizing committees, but really—

•(1615)

The Chair: There's a point of order.

Mr. Storseth.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Boshcoff, you've lost me here. Could I get somebody to explain what "umbrance" means?

The Chair: I'm not going to tackle that one.

Ken, did you have any more?

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: No, but that is not a.... One's own command of the English language is not a point of order.

The Chair: Next is Mr. Steckle, then Mr. Miller.

Mr. Paul Steckle: I don't want to prolong the discussion. We're going on a long time and doing semantics here. Basically, if we hadn't had the second document, we'd be through the complete document by now.

What we had previously was working. I've travelled this country three times, with this committee and once with the fisheries and oceans committee. I've never seen a meeting at which we didn't have enough people to conduct a meeting. If it's just for receiving evidence and information, it can go on regardless of whether you have the five people or not. We're not limiting ourselves by doing this.

I think we should turn back and deal with the motion that's on the table, get rid of it, and then go back to the original one. I would hope we would go back to what we had here before, because it has served us well, it will continue to serve us well, and I dare say that probably most of the committees on the Hill are working from this premise.

The Chair: Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: Just to go back to Mr. Boshcoff's comments, I was in no way insinuating that anybody deliberately showed up late. I was simply pointing out that it has happened that more than one member wasn't here, for various reasons. We have busy schedules down here, and it does happen. I was in no way insinuating that it happened deliberately, because I have no reason to believe that, and I

don't. It has happened—people straggle in—and it doesn't need to be struck from the record, as you say. You know it's there.

That's all I'm going to say on it. Let's vote on it.

The Chair: We have Mr. Boshcoff, then Mr. Martin, then the question.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Thank you.

I respect that Mr. Miller, as a former municipal colleague, knows that once an insinuation has been made in Hansard it stands as a record. I had to clarify that.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was simply going to point out that I'm a little taken aback too, that the government side wants to rewrite every single one of these rules. This is very unusual in my experience. I've been through four Parliaments where it's been the standard at every session to reconstitute the routine motions. I recognize this sheet as being the standard routine motions, but normally, one party or another will have one suggestion to make for one of the motions. Rarely do we have this whole agenda circulated because they literally want to rewrite every single clause. So maybe that explains some of the push-back you're getting from the opposition side.

I would also like to say that we're going about this in the reverse order. As a point of order, if you will, or as a point of procedure, we should be dealing with the routine motions that are circulated before every committee. If anybody has an amendment they want to make to those routine motions, one by one they can do that.

You have us going through the Conservative Party wish list, one by one, and we're put in the uncomfortable position of having to argue against your priorities, whereas, really, this committee should be dealing—

The Chair: Point taken, Mr. Martin, although I will entertain motions to put them onto the table.

Mr. Pat Martin: A ruling on this point of order is what I request.

The Chair: I'm just giving you a ruling right now on your point of order, that I entertain motions, as we're coming through here, to put them forward. The opposition or the government could have put any of the routine motions coming forward from the standard form. The government members were putting their motions on before. The procedure is that once the motion's on the floor, we have to deal with it.

Mr. Pat Martin: Then, Mr. Chairman, from this point on, we should be dealing with these motions as they come up under the routine motions, and if the government side wishes to make an amendment to one of them.... These are the ones that stand in the absence of anything else. They're the default position.

The Chair: They still have to be moved by committee to be dealt with.

Mr. Pat Martin: Yes, exactly.

The Chair: So be prepared, Mr. Martin, when I call for the motion for each point, to put it on the floor, if that's your purpose.

Mr. Pat Martin: In the interest of clarity, Mr. Chairman, I would appreciate it if you would deal with the routine motions rather than the government side motions as what you put on the floor.

The Chair: As a committee, we...

Mr. David Anderson: We made the motions. You can make these first. We were making these first. You have the opportunity.

The Chair: I wasn't seeing any from the other side.

Let's close debate off. Let's have the question on the reduced quorum, the one proposed by the government. Who moved that? Mr. Miller moved it.

• (1620)

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Chair, a point of order. That was a tie, and the chair breaks the tie.

The Chair: That wasn't a tie. It was six to five.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Hubbard did not vote. That was five to five.

The Chair: He's right—I didn't see Charlie vote. No, Mr. Boshcoff voted for it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: Do we have footage of that? I saw him move.

[*English*]

The Chair: No, it's five-five.

Mr. Brian Storseth: A point of order, Mr. Chair. If the honourable member doesn't realize what he's voting for, maybe he should do as Mr. Hubbard did, and he should abstain.

Mr. David Anderson: We had a vote, Mr. Chair. It's five-five.

Mr. Brian Storseth: It was a legitimate vote. You can't all of a sudden turn around and say “I was patting my colleague on the shoulder”.

The Chair: Just to clarify, because neither the clerk nor I saw it all for sure, we're taking Mr. Storseth's word on it. Let's do a roll call and call it one by one.

(Motion negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

The Chair: Next, on reduced quorum, is Mr. St. Amand.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: I move that the reduced quorum, as phrased on the single sheet headed “routine motions”, be amended to five.

The Chair: Will you read the motion?

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: I move that the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least five members are present, including one member of the opposition.

The Chair: Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: I have one question of clarification.

These draft routine motions were probably printed 30 years ago, when there were three parties in the House of Commons; now there are more than three. The way it reads, you could have one of the vice-chairs chairing the meeting and only opposition members

present, with no government members. Just so people are aware, that's what we're voting for.

I'm not sure it's desirable to call that quorum. I suggest, if my colleagues will entertain a friendly amendment, that it should say, “five members present, including one member of the opposition and one member of government”.

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

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: The amended motion reads:

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 five members are present, including one member of the opposition and one member of the government.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Next is distribution of documents.

Mr. Paul Steckle: I move that only the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the committee, and only when such documents exist in both official languages.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson has an amendment.

Mr. David Anderson: I would like to amend that to say:

That only the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents, including motions, to members of the committee, and only when such documents exist in both official languages. The clerk shall advise all witnesses appearing before the committee of this requirement.

• (1625)

The Chair: Next is discussion on the amendment.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: It doesn't matter so much to me, but I think this is one that the Bloc members should certainly embrace. I know they were upset a number of times previously when witnesses came here with documents that weren't in both languages. I think this would go further to ensure that didn't happen.

The Chair: Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: It is basically the clerk's job. I have no problem with the clerk having to advise witnesses appearing before the committee. On the other hand, I do not see the point of Mr. Anderson's amendment to add motions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any other discussion on the motions?

Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: I have the same concern as André, that if there is some barrier to circulating and producing motions it may hold members back in their interest in trying to promote something at the committee. There's probably a good reason why the word “motions” was left out of the original clause, as contemplated in the routine motions. I would vote against having the words include “motions”, but I wouldn't object to adding the sentence at the end, “that the clerk so advise all witnesses”.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson, we will be dealing with notices of motion as a standing order, as well.

Mr. David Anderson: I think the point is that we get everything going through the clerk only, so that everything is going to him—and that includes motions—so that they come back to us, so we have the same amount of time to see them, the same amount of time to prepare—other than the person who has written them, obviously, who will know ahead of time—and that they have to be in both official languages at the time of distribution.

That hasn't always.... Things get handed out, and they don't necessarily go through the clerk, so we're unsure about where these motions are at. I think this would just clarify it.

The Chair: Just for clarification, Jean-François is telling me that any clerk is not allowed to circulate any document or motion if it's not in both official languages.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: Just further to that, I'd like somebody to explain to me what the problem is. I have a motion that I'm going to give notice on today. I thought I had to have it in both official languages. I've done that. To me it's an advantage for anybody who doesn't read English. If there's a problem, tell me what the problem is.

The Chair: Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: That might be the practice in this committee, but in other committees that I know about you can submit motions in one of the official languages. Maybe to circulate it further, it should be in both languages. But it would be a barrier for me to submit a spontaneous notice of motion if I had to go and have it translated first.

It's not unusual in the course of a committee meeting to jot down a motion and hand it to the clerk, that it should be serving notice, at least, of it. I don't think it has to be in both official languages. I think it can be in one of the official languages in terms of moving the motion. For circulating it further, then the clerk would obviously have to do it in both languages.

The Chair: Any time you send anything to the clerk, though, regardless of the committee, the clerk has the obligation to get it translated before it's circulated. You're talking about spontaneity, but the clerk still has to receive notice and translate it before it can be distributed to the committee members.

Mr. Pat Martin: But the notice can be in one language. Larry doesn't have to have it in both languages now.

The Chair: That's true.

Mr. Larry Miller: Anyway, here, to give notice.... I guess I probably don't.

I don't think, then, Pat, that would exclude you from making a spontaneous notice of motion. It's when the motion actually....

Am I correct in that?

Mr. Guy Lauzon: They're talking about documents.

The Chair: Documents—

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Why would we want documents bilingual?

The Chair: Documents and anything that's coming from government, coming from witnesses, coming from other members as information for the committee in its work need to be in both official languages before they're distributed.

We have an amendment on the floor. Are there any further comments?

Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: We are getting two separate issues mixed up. It states that only the clerk is authorized to distribute any kind of documentation, including motions. There is no reference here yet to bilingual documents, for example.

I agree with Pat, a member may suddenly wish to raise a particular issue and discuss it with committee colleagues by moving a motion. Now, when it comes time to voting on the official motion or discussing it, it has to be in both official languages. However, there is nothing stopping a member from moving a motion in his or her own language, out of the blue, and discussing it. We also have simultaneous interpretation. So it is not exactly the same thing.

Having to go through the clerk would take away members' flexibility. That is the official way of moving motions and it is what is done in probably 99.9% of cases. Now, as far as I am concerned, since I became a member, I have always gone through the clerk. However, something may come up just before a meeting, or during a committee meeting, and a member might feel the need to move his or her motion immediately. And that is how we lose that flexibility.

• (1630)

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: I'd like to propose what I would hope would be a friendly amendment—I guess it would be an amendment to the amendment—that we change it so that this would exclude notices of motion. So basically all documents would have to come forth, but it would let Pat's and obviously André's concerns off the hook if when it came to a notice of motion you wouldn't necessarily have to have it in both official languages at that point.

You don't want that either?

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: That is not at all what we are saying either.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: We can keep the wording which appeared in the routine motion. And we can add: "The clerk shall advise all witnesses appearing before the committee of this requirement."

Then, that will work.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is it the chair or the clerk?

A voice: The clerk.

The Chair: It's the clerk. Okay, it was translated as the chair.

Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I think

[*Translation*]

seeing problems when there are none.

[*English*]

We're getting caught up in the details.

All we're trying to say—I think this is what this phrase says—is that only the clerk of the committee is authorized to distribute any documents to the members of the committee. What's the matter with that? Don't we want the clerk to be the person who ought to make sure of that? That means that Larry isn't authorized. It means the clerk is going to distribute the documents, including motions, and advise witnesses that their documents should be bilingual. Why are we getting hung up on this?

Isn't that what we're trying to say, Mr. Clerk?

The Clerk: Yes. For example, the last time we went across Canada on our fact-finding mission, the very first thing I told every witness I called on the phone or communicated with in any other way was not to forget that all documents have to be in both official languages.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: That's why we put it through the clerk, so that he ensures it's in both official languages. That's the intent of this. It's not some kind of a—

The Chair: It's already a common practice of the clerk. It's just a matter of putting it into a motion.

Monsieur Roy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: In any case, it is repetitious to say, “the clerk shall inform all witnesses appearing before the committee of the requirement of using both official languages”. Everybody knows that committees operate in both official languages that this is mandatory. It does not have to be written because it is already the clerk's job to inform the witnesses of such.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: That is what we are saying.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: But it is not necessary put it writing, because it is a part of the clerk's job.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, first we have to vote on the amendment as moved by Mr. Anderson.

Did you move that subamendment, or were you trying to throw that out as a friendly amendment?

Mr. Larry Miller: My God, this is an improvement, particularly for the Bloc, and they don't want it. Let's call the vote.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson's subamendment is on the table. It reads, if I'm not mistaken, as follows:

That only the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents, including motions, to members of the committee and only when such documents exist

in both official languages. The clerk shall advise all witnesses appearing before the committee of this requirement.

That includes the amendments.

(Amendment negated)

● (1635)

The Chair: We're back to the original motion as moved by Mr. Steckle.

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

The Chair: With respect to working meals, are there any motions?

Mr. Paul Steckle: I'll make a motion that the clerk of the committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide for working meals for committees and their subcommittees.

Have I got the right one?

The Chair: You can choose whatever one you want.

Mr. Paul Steckle: Yes, we're going to use that one. It worked well before.

Mr. Larry Miller: Are you sure you're in favour?

Mr. Paul Steckle: Yes, I'm in favour. I know Roger was always in favour of that.

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor for working meals.

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

The Chair: Now we're on witnesses' expenses. I need a motion on the floor.

Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: I would like to make our motion. I think everyone has it, so they can take a look at their paper. Or do you want me to read it out?

The Chair: Read it out.

Mr. David Anderson: This is with respect to witnesses' expenses:

That as established by the Board of Internal Economy, and if requested, reasonable travelling, accommodation, and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses who are invited to appear before the committee, up to a maximum of two representatives from any one organization, and that if requested, reasonable child care expenses of the witnesses shall be reimbursed.

The Chair: Mr. St. Amand.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: I have a flippant comment. Canadians have been given a choice as a result of the budget. They have the \$100 a month. Do they need more? The government says they need more than \$100 a month.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: Well, I challenge Mr. St. Amand, then, to vote against our motion.

The Chair: Any other comment?

Mr. Hubbard.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: Is there any precedent for this, any other committee, any other time, any other...?

The Chair: I couldn't tell you.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: I mean, whoever wrote this... I guess Mr. Anderson must have some precedents. Why would he...?

Mr. David Anderson: We don't have to have precedents in order to be generous to people. We simply felt it was important. We've had some witnesses come here who represented young families and we thought it was fair to give them the opportunity to apply for the cost of their child care as well.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: I have no problem with David's suggestion. However, the motion as it reads: "[...] under exceptional circumstances, reimbursing a greater number of representative shall be left at the discretion of the Chair."

I believe that we should leave this as is.

A voice: Yes.

Mr. André Bellavance: I do not believe that this has occurred often, but if it ever happens, this will give you power, Mr. Chair. It is important.

[*English*]

The Chair: To clarify as well, in the last minutes from May 4, 2006, we changed it slightly. We said "...in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be at the discretion of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure".

Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: I'd like to make a point. I don't think we need to have more than two representatives here on the taxpayer's dollar. If two of them can't give a pretty clear presentation... I don't remember a situation where we've brought three in. I think we're usually crowded at the table. Two representatives from each organization seems to be plenty. But we think this is a reasonable motion, so we'd like support for it.

The Chair: Okay. Are there other comments?

Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: I am putting forward a subamendment to the motion. I want to see added the words you said appear in the present wording.

[*English*]

The Chair: You want to make an amendment, okay. So we're going to add in—

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: These are the words "[...] under exceptional circumstances [...]".

[*English*]

The Chair: —"in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be at the discretion of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure".

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: Yes.

• (1640)

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, that's the amendment to the motion. Any comments?

Mr. Steckle.

Mr. Paul Steckle: You want me to speak to the amendment. I'm not going to speak to the amendment. I'll speak to something—

The Chair: Let's deal with the amendment first.

Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: Can I get you to read the amendment again?

And I would like to point out, since Mr. Hubbard asked if there was any precedent, that actually the Standing Committee on the Status of Women this morning passed this motion. It was made by Pat Davidson, and Judy Sgro was chairing the meeting at the time.

The Chair: The amendment again is to add in at the end, "in exceptional circumstances...".

Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: Excuse me. I need to correct that. It is not the same. They limited it to one representative per organization, but they did allow for the reasonable child care expenses. I think he was asking where that came from.

The Chair: Every committee is, of course, master of its own destiny or demise and precedents.

Okay, "...in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be at the discretion of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure". That is the amendment. The question is on the amendment.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: It's dealing with the one that Mr. Anderson—

The Chair: Yes, this is an add-on to the witnesses' expenses.

Mr. Larry Miller: It's not the one André was talking about.

The Chair: No, this is what André is proposing as the amendment.

The amendment to witnesses' expenses, "...in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be at the discretion of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure". I'll call the question.

Is it four to four?

A voice: Five to four.

The Chair: Five to four. In favour?

Mr. David Anderson: I saw four.

The Chair: I saw four too.

Get your hands up again. Guys, let's get voting here. We're going to have all sorts of difficulties.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance: I would like the clerk to tell us whether the motion has been passed or not. It is up to the clerk to determine who has voted and who has not. I myself, do not count the votes.

[English]

The Chair: And I will determine it. That's why I asked you guys to get your hands up.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Paul, do you have a comment on the full motion?

Mr. Paul Steckle: On the issue of child care—and I have a deep feeling for those kinds of things—what is reasonable? I have been here 14 years, and I realize that time marches on, but I have never heard of someone coming here and putting forward a bill for child care expenses.

I somehow feel that there are certain things we do in life. We give up certain things sometimes to have a family, and if we expect government or someone else to carry that whole load in every aspect of life, I think we're opening ourselves up to something. It's not because I don't support child care, because I do. But I don't think this kind of thing is where we need to become engaged.

The Chair: Yes, there is some flexibility in what are reasonable expenses for which they apply for reimbursement.

Mr. Paul Steckle: Is this new and precedent-setting?

The Clerk: Child care?

Mr. Paul Steckle: Yes. We've never done this before.

The Clerk: Not that I know of.

The Chair: It was done earlier.

Go ahead, Monsieur Roy.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Mr. Chair, I agree that we should pay child's care expenses. In fact, a situation happened at the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans where an aboriginal person refused to appear because she was unable to find care for her children. I sat on that committee for five years and I believe that Jean-François was the clerk at the time this happened.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. Are there any other comments or debate?

(Motion agreed to)

•(1645)

The Chair: The next item is staff at in camera meetings.

Mr. Paul Steckle: I would propose that we move the original procedure as we've done in the past at in camera meetings, which is that unless otherwise ordered, each committee member is allowed to be accompanied by one staff person at an in camera meeting.

I see no reason for any member to be accompanied by a party member. I think this is politics, and I don't think we need that. We've gotten along just fine. Our people go with us, as committee members, to represent us and to take notes, perhaps, on things we may have missed in the order of doing our work. We can refer to

those people when we go back to our respective offices. We don't have to refer to the party.

I therefore submit that we make this the motion at hand.

The Chair: Are there any comments?

We'll have Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: I think each of the parties has contact with their whip's office with regard to committee meetings, so this is just an opportunity to give the parties a chance to have one person from that office in the in camera meeting. There is nothing more to it than that.

The Chair: Are there other comments?

Go ahead, Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: I'm leaning toward Mr. Steckle's point of view. I don't think I can support a change, or I don't think it's necessary. Go back to the default, ordinary motions that we're all used to and that we've worked under all these years.

The Chair: We'll go to Monsieur Bellavance.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance: I would like to know what directive is currently applied in this committee.

[English]

The Chair: At the last session, we kind of did transcripts and staff at in camera meetings in one motion. We've now separated them.

Actually, it was André who moved the following motion, and he kind of combined staff and transcripts:

That one copy of the transcript of all in camera meetings be kept in the clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee, and that unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to have one staff person present at in camera meetings.

We can either combine them as we did in the last session, or we can keep them separate the way they're laid out as proposed, as in kind of the 30-year-old document, as Pat called it.

Yes, Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: I'd like to recommend that we move for this parliamentary session the exact wording that you had in the last parliamentary session.

The Chair: The motion on the table.... No, the one you've got is the one that's on here, not the one that came from the minutes.

We have Mr. Anderson and Mr. Lauzon, and somebody over here was raising a hand—Mr. Boshcoff.

Go ahead, Mr. Boshcoff.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I believe we could pass it according to Mr. Steckle's suggestion with this amendment that it would be a staff member who was from the house leader's office or the whip's office or the research bureau. That's the only amendment I could see.

I'd ask you to entertain that.

The Chair: We have an amendment on the floor, before we get moving forward, that unless otherwise ordered, each committee member would be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person at an in camera meeting, and that staff member could be a member from the house leader's office, the whip's office, or the research department of the party.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Yes.

The Chair: The person could also be from the member's office; that's what's implied, I think, as one staff person.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Could you spell it out, though, just to make sure?

The Chair: It could be the member's office; we've got that. Now we're going to debate the amendment.

Go ahead, Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: All right, perhaps we might have to check the Standing Orders.

I have in my hands the minutes of the last meeting where we discussed this matter, and it is even more simple that what has just been proposed. The following motion was passed unanimously:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each Committee member be allowed to have one staff person present at in camera meetings.

This includes research staff, the whip, and a staff member from our party. That was the motion that was passed.

• (1650)

[*English*]

The Chair: It just says "one staff person" present at in camera meetings. We didn't say...

This only applies, of course, to in camera meetings.

Next we have Mr. Anderson and Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. David Anderson: Could you read Mr. Boshcoff's amendment? I think we would be willing to support it if we could get the text of it.

The Chair: My understanding is that what we have here is "that unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person at an in camera meeting, and that staff person may be from the member's office, the house leader's office, the whip's office, or the research department".

Did you want to make comments on that?

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: We are moving right along here.

Next we have in camera meeting transcripts. Last time we put the two motions together. Now we have it separated.

Go ahead, Mr. St. Amand.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would propose under this topic that our motion be "that one copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee".

That's the motion, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to speak to it, if I may.

I understand the current long-standing policy has been for such transcripts to be kept for a minimum of 30 years. I haven't heard of a single instance in which that practice has been violated or abused, and I think it should continue.

The Chair: All transcripts of in camera meetings get forwarded to the National Archives. They're held to the end of the parliamentary session. They're in the clerk's office until the end of the session and then they go to the archives.

Go ahead, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: I'm going to make an amendment, because I always assumed up until this minute that my conversations in camera were private, and now I find out that in the future they will not be. So I'm going to make the amendment we had on our sheet and add that these transcripts be destroyed at the end of the session. I think that's reasonable.

In seven years I didn't realize that what we discussed in camera is going to be made public eventually.

The Chair: They aren't destroyed, but, like cabinet documents, they are still held in confidence for 30 years and then they're made available to the public after 30 years.

It's amazing what people read, and I've said so many nasty things.

And if somebody passes away, if it's about a specific person, they can release within 25 years.

So we have an amendment on the floor.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: I'm like Mr. Anderson. I'd seen this on here today and wondered why it was there. I had no idea this could ever become public.

I don't think I've ever said anything in camera that I'm ashamed of, but at the same time, in camera is in camera. I'll support the amendment for that reason. This shouldn't be available tomorrow, today, or 30 years from now.

The Chair: Other comments?

The question is on the amendment by Mr. Anderson, that these transcripts be destroyed at the end of the session.

(Amendment negated)

• (1655)

The Chair: We're back to the main motion by Mr. St. Amand, which is in front of you. Is there further discussion on transcripts of in camera meetings?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now, notice of motions.

Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: I'd like to move that our motion, as printed in our presentation, be considered:

That 48 hours notice shall be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the committee; and that the period of notice be calculated from the time the motion has been distributed to the members of the committee by the clerk of the committee; and that the motion shall be distributed to members in both official languages; and that all motions received by the clerk shall be placed upon the agenda of the first committee meeting following the period of notice.

The Chair: Comments?

Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: It would seem that there is an abundance of suggestions to limit the work of members or to impose restrictions.

Once again, normally things have worked rather well at the Standing Committee on Agriculture. I do not understand why we are creating irritants to tabling documents, motions, carrying out the work that we do on a regular basis.

Therefore, we must do what we have always done and provide a 48-hour notice. This restriction is perfectly normal, and allows us a degree of flexibility. Now, we are adding restrictions that I do not agree with.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, then Mr. Martin next.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I already had an experience that was not good.

[*English*]

One time, when I was chair of the official languages committee, one of the members did his due diligence and presented the motion to the clerk, but sometimes it gets caught up in the circuit and you get the motion—I think in this case it was eight hours before, and it really wasn't fair. I'm entitled, everyone's entitled, to 48 hours.

I guess that's never happened with this committee, but if you end up with an important motion eight hours before, you don't have time to prepare or do any research.

This is the rule, isn't it? It's 48 hours. I think that's just clarifying that rule. I think that's a good rule. It's fair for everybody. The clerk has to do his due diligence then and make sure that everybody gets this at the same time.

I would strongly support that.

The Chair: Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've always worked toward trying to have the notice lowered in any committee that I've been on. We managed to do that at the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development when I was on that committee, and also on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. Some committees require no notice, and that's certainly to the advantage of opposition members. Some committees require 24 hours' notice, and that's what I always push for and recommend, because when you're only meeting twice a week—some committees meet Tuesdays and Thursdays, some meet Mondays and Wednesdays—if you have a

matter of some urgency and you want it at the next committee meeting, it's not always possible if a rigid 48 hours' notice is necessary to achieve that. We believe that one sleep is enough.

I will also certainly speak against the language in Mr. Anderson's proposed motion, that the period of notice be calculated from the time the motion has been distributed to other members of the committee by the clerk of the committee. That throws an additional spanner into things. The way we calculate it in other committees is one sleep, 24 hours' notice is required. If I get it to the clerk of the committee at 6 p.m., and the next meeting starts at 11 the next morning, that one sleep served as one day or 24 hours' notice. That's the way the other committees operate

. I'm only suggesting that's our preference, especially as opposition members are at a power imbalance disadvantage. Let's face it, the government side has all the power on committees—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pat Martin:—even when the numbers are like this, because they have the inside track to the government. A lot of these committees are structured to correct some of that historic imbalance by giving some powers to the opposition so that in this place at least, in this tiny little corner of Parliament, we can have a fair fight.

I would speak strongly against the motion put forward by Mr. Anderson, and I'll be moving an amendment of my own if we get back to the main motion.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: I think Mr. Martin is being ridiculous, because this committee has always worked on 48 hours. This is an attempt to make it more fair for other members, including the opposition.

Can you let me talk, Pat? Could you be quiet?

● (1700)

Mr. Pat Martin: I don't think that's parliamentary to say that what I say is ridiculous.

Mr. David Anderson: I listened to your silliness.

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Chairman, could you put some order in this place? First he calls me ridiculous, and now it's silliness. I resent that profoundly. We're going to have a debate about his motion or we shouldn't be debating at all.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson, I ask that you use more parliamentary language.

Mr. Pat Martin: Yes, smarten up.

Mr. David Anderson: Like smarten up?

The Chair: You too, Mr. Martin.

Mr. David Anderson: We'll both try not to be childish.

The 48 hours' notice we've had at this committee has worked well. The point of this motion is to try to make it fair for everybody, including members of the opposition.

The second part of that talks about the period of notice being calculated from when the motion has been distributed. We have traditionally accepted that and expected that we would have 48 hours' notice to treat people fairly at this committee. We can play. If you want to go one night before, everybody can start playing silly games, and we're going to have absolute chaos here. This is an opportunity to allow the clerk to distribute motions, 48 hours' notice—we're all on the same page—and then at the end there is a guarantee or a commitment that those motions come forward at the first committee meeting following the period of notice.

We've also been in a situation where we've had notices that haven't come forward immediately, and this brings that forward and allows members to bring their motion forward. It will be dealt with, and perhaps not finished at that meeting, but at least it will be brought forward. People can bring their motions forward, present them to the committee, and then the committee will decide what to do with them from there. Nothing here particularly benefits the government. I think it would clearly benefit the operation of this committee, particularly since we've worked on 48 hours' notice. We just want to make sure that 48 hours is fair to everybody, and that comes from the time the clerk distributes the motion. I don't think there's anything nefarious there. It's pretty clear, it puts everyone on the same page, and doesn't give us any particular advantage.

The Chair: For information's sake, this is the motion from the minutes of the last meeting, on May 4, 2006, moved by Mr. Steckle:

That except for amendments to bills, 48 hours' notice be given before any substantive motion is considered by the committee; that the notice of motion be filed with the clerk of the committee and circulated to members in both official languages; and that, upon receipt of the notice, the clerk shall put the motion on the agenda of the committee's next meeting.

Mr. David Anderson: It's fairly similar, except it talks specifically about when the period of that 48 hours starts, so there's no question about it for any of us.

The Chair: Mr. Storseth and then Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I've already sat on a couple of other committees this session that have dealt with this, and we've always received cooperation from the opposition, primarily the Liberals on this, because this is simply trying to clarify the procedure on it a little bit so we don't have any of the problems that happened within the Standing Committee on Official Languages, as Mr. Lauzon said. I have heard this.

Surely there are enough lawyers around the table who realize we can't be codifying things in sleeps here, just because the NDP sends its hired gun on procedural shenanigans into the committee. We need to have some level of professionalism in this committee; it's very important. We need to be doing things in hours, and something we can actually time. I think it's important that we codify this, and 48 hours' notice is the tradition we've used on just about every committee.

The Chair: Other comments?

Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: The whole idea of this motion is to make it fair. I think if we all get it at the same time, whether it's 48 hours or 48 days, at least we're all running the same race. What happens now is that in some cases, for some people, it's not when I give it to the

clerk, it's when you and everybody around the table gets it. So I don't have an advantage by making it....

That's the fair thing. That's what Parliament is supposed to be about and that's what this committee is supposed to be about—fairness. Everybody should get the information at the same time.

If we don't adopt this, then I think we're doing ourselves a real disservice. This is a professional motion, that's what I think.

The Chair: Mr. Boshcoff.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Through you, Mr. Chair, may I ask which committees have passed this particular phrasing on motions so far this term, this session?

The Chair: I haven't done the research on it.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: No, I'm sorry, I'm asking Mr. Storseth, through you.

Mr. Brian Storseth: I'd have to look into that. I was on the aboriginal affairs committee yesterday, and there was no issue with it at all. As a matter of fact, it was just looked at as.... We left it open, and we put 48 in there.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: With the provision that the clock starts ticking after?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Yes. It was exactly as I've read it here, Mr. Boshcoff.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Okay, thank you very much.

The Chair: Comments or questions?

● (1705)

Mr. Paul Steckle: We're dealing with the motion as it now reads exactly...?

The Chair: The motion as presented by Mr. Anderson reads as follows:

That 48 hours notice shall be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the committee; and that the period of notice be calculated from the time the motion has been distributed to the members of the committee by the clerk of the committee; and that the motion shall be distributed to members in both official languages; and that all motions received by the clerk shall be placed upon the agenda of the first committee meeting following the period of notice.

All in favour?

We have a tie; Mr. Hubbard is abstaining. The motion carries.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next motion has to do with rounds of questioning. This is the one that we've practised at committee since I've been here, which goes back almost four years. I'll read it out:

That witnesses be given ten minutes for their opening statement; that, at the discretion of the chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated seven minutes for the first questioner of each party; that before the second round of questioning, other members who have not spoken and who wish to speak may do so for five minutes; and that thereafter, five minutes be allocated to each subsequent questioner alternating between government and opposition parties.

The rotation is Liberal, Bloc, Conservative, NDP, Liberal, first round. Second round is Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Bloc. And the practice is that everybody at committee gets to have a question before it circulates back to anybody else, unless they choose to pass.

Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: What you have just read describes how we operate currently.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's what I said. This is our current practice.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: OK. It is fine. Let's vote on it. All is good.

[*English*]

The Chair: So are we moving it?

Mr. André Bellavance: I so move.

The Chair: Mr. Martin, question?

Mr. Pat Martin: My only observation is that it's a little lean on NDP speaking opportunities in terms of questioning. I don't know if I heard you properly, but did you say that the NDP had the fourth spot and then not again?

The Chair: Not again until every other member on the committee asks a question, and then we rotate back.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: I just wanted to clarify that, because that's always been an issue with me, that some members get to speak twice before some other members get to speak at all.

Mr. Paul Steckle: The chairman usually makes sure that this doesn't happen.

The Chair: This is the practice of the committee. It goes back to Paul's day as chair, actually.

Any other comments?

Mr. St. Amand.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand: I have "rounds of questioning" in my copy, and nothing about the order of parties.

The Chair: This one here is the one that was brought forward by the government. I read off the one that is the practice. This is the standard one we've used for the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: The motion that you have in front of you is what the committee used last time?

The Chair: This is what the committee used last time, and it's moved by Mr. Bellavance. I believe this wasn't circulated. Do you want me to circulate this so that you guys can see it? Is there no need?

That one is slightly different, but it says the same thing.

This is the one that we're using. It wasn't circulated, but that's the standard one.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Are there any other issues?

Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: We have a couple more motions we'd like to bring forward. They can be found on our paper. The first one is the priority of legislation. The motion I'd like to make is that the consideration and examination of any bill, government or private member's bill, which falls within the express mandate of the committee shall take precedence over any study or non-legislative examination and motions. In such circumstances the non-legislative study shall be deferred until such time as the bill is reported back to the House.

We've had a parliamentary convention that would put off other committee business to deal with legislation. This formalizes it so we can avoid any future points of contention over that. I think it's fair to both government and private members' bills in ensuring that the committee's focus is on what the House has sent to us.

The Chair: Mr. Bellavance, and then Mr. Boshcoff.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: No. In this respect, I believe the committee has to be the master of its own fate. It is up to the committee to decide where its priorities lie. It is what we have always done, and I want it to continue.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Boshcoff.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: I can only echo Monsieur Bellavance's comments. This committee has to deal quickly oftentimes with crisis situations. We, as representatives of the agricultural and agribusiness communities, have to be able to move quickly on this and not stand in line for something that the government may decide is more of a priority. Consequently, I believe that this should be struck altogether and that we continue making our own priorities as a collegial working group.

The Chair: Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: I also feel that. I've just been advised that this is more or less the same language as in the Standing Orders, Marleau-Montpetit, and everything else. That is the practice, but it's not absolute. If we put this language into effect, for instance, government bills or private members' bills have to be dealt with by the committee within a certain timeframe, but it doesn't mean you have to stop everything that you're doing.

For example, if you're in the middle of a non-legislative study and there are four more meetings necessary to finish that study, currently the committee could carry on with their non-legislative study and finish it. Or, if an urgent matter like mad cow had come up, you wouldn't want to be interrupted by somebody's private member's bill. The policy now as it stands in Marleau-Montpetit or the Standing Orders is that the committee does have to deal with it, but again they're the masters of their own agenda.

I'd speak against this priority-of-legislation amendment.

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I just think it's formalizing a procedure or practice that's been in place, certainly in the little bit of time that I've been here. From what I gather, some of you have been here a lot longer than I have. Has that not been the way?

I don't see anything wrong with formalizing it. Now we get criticized for taking so long to pass legislation. Shouldn't we be trying to hurry up legislation and make sure that we get legislation to committee, get it studied and back to the House so that we can get this legislation in order?

The Chair: Mr. Steckle.

Mr. Paul Steckle: To counter that, Mr. Lauzon, I'd simply say that, as the chairman has already alluded to today, we are the masters of our destiny. If we completely tie ourselves to legislation and language that precludes us taking a different course from what might be the government's initiative for that day, while it may not be urgent, they may ask us to do it anyway. I think this committee should never be deprived of that right. It's something we've always prided ourselves on, and I would hope that our committees could always do that and we together, collectively, could be able to do that.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

(Motion negatived)

The Chair: Is there any other business?

Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: It's another motion, Mr. Chair, to deal with motions deemed abandoned. I think people can read this, but the motions reads:

All motions shall be moved by their sponsor within two meetings of their first being listed on the agenda as committee business, failing which the motion shall be deemed abandoned by the mover and shall be dispensed with and may no longer be subject to committee consideration.

This is just simply a reaction to situations where we found people giving notice of motions but then not following through with them, so just leaving them in limbo, and then no one knows when they're going to come forward. It's not healthy for the committee's business. We're just suggesting that if people are going to make motions, they should treat them seriously and bring them forward within two committee meetings, or else they would be abandoned. If they want to bring them back at another point, I guess that's up to them, but we don't just leave motions in limbo as far as the committee is concerned.

The Chair: Mr. Steckle.

Mr. Paul Steckle: I would oppose that change in the rules as we now have them because just as recently as in the last session, in a filibuster we had in this committee, there were two people—one with the NDP and I believe one with the Bloc—who put forward motions, and we didn't get to them for successive meetings because of a filibuster. Those motions or amendments would have been lost, so I would hope that we don't go down that road. Once a motion's been put in place, it should stay there until it's dealt with, and I see no need of doing that.

• (1715)

The Chair: Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: I guess all I can say is I would certainly support that, but there's nothing in here to say that it can't be brought back. I know what Paul is referring to, and to me that's not the reason this was brought in. There are some instances in other committees that you may or may not be aware of that happened, that were deliberately done, and this would fix that problem.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson, and then Mr. Bellavance.

Mr. David Anderson: I have a question on the two motions we had before the committee last session. The motions were moved. They weren't just left on notice, were they?

The Clerk: Which one? I'm sorry.

Mr. David Anderson: The two that Mr. Steckle was talking about.

Mr. Paul Steckle: They were dealt with. We ultimately got to them after the filibuster. We eventually got to them because they were changes that they were proposing, but we dealt with them. The session was there long enough for us to do that. They would have died with the session anyway, so they would have to be brought back.

Mr. David Anderson: I understand those motions were moved. The motions were made, but this doesn't affect those. This affects motions that are given, just notice of motions, and then nothing more is done with them and they're just left hanging in space. Actually, to correct something I said and Mr. Miller said, it does make the point that they will be dispensed with and may no longer be considered, so people are going to have to treat them seriously. If they want to bring them forward, they're either going to have to deal with them or they won't be considered again.

The Chair: Just to clarify, Mr. Anderson is saying they can't be left on the notice paper, they actually have to get moved at committee.

Mr. David Anderson: Those two motions were moved at committee. They weren't just left on the notice paper.

The Chair: Okay, so that's a clarification. So people who are putting motions on notice, but never bringing them forward to committee, and they're sitting there in limbo, they're saying that if they don't get moved at committee, they will be then dispensed with forever.

Mr. Larry Miller: I think I'm clear on this. So on the motions that André and whoever brought forth—the ones we're talking about—this would not affect those because they were actually moved.

The Chair: They were actually moved.

Mr. Larry Miller: Okay. I think there's a big difference, and that needs to be....

Mr. Paul Steckle: They were never dealt with.

Mr. Larry Miller: This would not eliminate them, Paul.

The Chair: No, Ken's motion in the last session wasn't put on the floor, so Ken's would have been allowed. That would have happened. Alex had two that he filed, one he moved and one he didn't. So the ones that weren't moved by Ken and Alex would have actually been lost.

Mr. David Anderson: They would have to be moved. They can't just sit there forever.

The Chair: You have to get them on the floor at some point.

Okay, it's as clear as mud.

(Motion negatived)

The Chair: Any other business?

Mr. David Anderson: Yes, there is one more motion. We want to make the last one on our list. It deals with minority reports, and I think it's pretty similar to what we had in the past; that is:

That every party shall have the right to attach, as an annex, a dissenting opinion on any report to be presented to the House of Commons by the committee; and that this dissenting opinion shall be submitted to the clerk of the committee within 72 hours of the passing of the report by the committee.

That actually probably puts more structure on it than we had before.

The Chair: Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: For information, what is the current practice, or is there any reference to it in your...?

The Chair: We dealt with it on a case-by-case basis. We didn't have any reference point.

Mr. Pat Martin: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Boshcoff.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

First, normally, for the record, regarding the word “annex”, it may be wordsmithing, but I believe Standing Order 108(1)(a) uses the word “appendix” for dissenting opinions. So that's its own question.

We had used a 12- or 24-hour maximum for the passing of the report, and I feel that what we have now works quite fine.

So I'm questioning the need for 72 hours, and I'm questioning the word change.

The Chair: Mr. Boshcoff, to be clear, we don't have a standing order on this. We've done it on a case-by-case basis here. We haven't had a procedure that we've adopted at committee.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Okay.

• (1720)

The Chair: We've always dealt with it after a report is filed, if there is a minority position that wants to be brought forward.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: That sounds pretty good to me.

The Chair: For clarification, the way it's ruled in the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, when standing committees make a report from time to time, “to print a brief appendix”—this is dealing with minority reports—“to any report”—so it's an appendix to the report—“after the signature of the Chair”. So the chair's signature comes on first, and then a minority report is attached.

Are there any other questions?

Mr. Martin.

Mr. Pat Martin: I just ask Mr. Anderson, why the 72 hours? What is the reasoning behind the seemingly arbitrary timeframe that he chose?

Mr. David Anderson: I didn't choose that. I understood 72 hours has been a fairly regular time that's been put on them. We didn't have one, and I concur with the chair on that, but I think other committees have had 72 hours.

I shouldn't say that. Actually, the Standing Committee on International Trade this morning passed that any member of the committee has the right to attach as an annex a dissenting opinion on any report to be presented to the House of Commons by the

committee within the conditions imposed by the committee and in accordance with the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. So that's similar to what we've done in the past.

The Chair: Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: On just the last comment, the reason for 72 hours that I would see is that if this report happened to get presented on a Friday—or I should say, if the motion were put forth—you would need 72 hours to get you through to the Monday.

The Chair: Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: Once again, I find that we are tying the hands of MPs, whereas, as Ken said, the status quo works just fine. There is flexibility, we work on a case by case basis. Often, the analyst from the Library of Parliament asks us if we want a 20 page or 80 page report, and everything is based upon the committee's wishes. We have never argued over the issue of timelines. The last time the conservatives tabled a minority report, I recall David recounting how many days or how much time we had. I am not recall arguing over the matter. On the contrary, we gave parties the time they needed to present a minority report.

Therefore, I would prefer that we continue working this way, not setting timelines that would tie our hands. We already have enough restrictions as it is.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, are there any other comments?

I'll call the question.

(Motion negated)

The Chair: That wraps it up.

Is there any other business?

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: First, Mr. Chairman, I'd like it duly noted in the minutes that I abstained on the vote on the motion dealing with witnesses' expenses.

Secondly, I want to put a notice of motion here, and I'll read it if it's appropriate, so that I've given the due 48 hours' notice so this can be dealt with at our next meeting:

That the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food request that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food conduct a full review of all inspection fees charged by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; and that this information be used by the minister to investigate possible options for the government to deal with the inequity between what Canadian livestock producers and packing plants pay for inspection fees as compared to their counterparts in the United States.

I have it in both official languages. I apologize that I don't have extra copies, but I'm sure the clerk can order some.

The Chair: So 48 hours' notice is given.

I have a question before we adjourn. We need to have a steering committee meeting to set the agenda and topic items. We'll do that on Monday at 3:30. The question is, do we want to do it just as the subcommittee, or do we want to do it as a committee of the whole?

Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: Are you talking about a subcommittee to prepare the agenda?

[*English*]

The Chair: I mean to prepare the agenda. And my suggestion is that maybe we do it at a committee of the whole, and then everybody can get their debate on and then nobody else—

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: We already do that in subcommittee.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Let's do it first in subcommittee.

Mr. André Bellavance: As you wish. Normally, we establish a subcommittee first and then speak to the members of the committee about it.

● (1725)

[*English*]

The Chair: True enough, but I'm suggesting, since we have only eight scheduled meetings left, that on Monday we just meet—I think a lot of people are leaving tomorrow—as a committee of the whole, go in camera and deal with our agenda. At that point in time we will decide how we want to proceed until Christmas. Okay?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Great.

Is there any other business?

Do we have a motion to adjourn?

Thank you, Mr. Steckle.

We're adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.