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Thursday, February 5, 2009

—
Chair

Mr. Lee Richardson

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• (0905)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean-Marie David): I see a quorum.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. I'm ready to receive motions to that effect.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Clerk, it may surprise you to learn that although I've had difficulties with chairs of this committee in this past on a number of occasions, there is one past chair who I feel would be exceptional in providing service to this committee and in shepherding us through some rather difficult issues. So I'd like to propose the name of Lee Richardson to act as chair for this committee.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Julian that Mr. Richardson be elected 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 carried and Mr. Richardson elected chair of the committee.

Before inviting Mr. Richardson to take the chair, if the committee wishes, we'll now proceed to the election of the vice-chairs. Are there any motions?

The Chair (Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC)): Yes, I'd like to move that John Cannis be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Richardson that Mr. Cannis be elected as first 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: We'll now move to the election of the second vice-chair. Are there any motions?

Monsieur Guimond.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): I nominate Mr. Cardin.

[English]

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Guimond that Mr. Cardin be elected second vice-chair.

[Translation]

Are there any other motions?

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

(Motion carried to)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, committee. I'm humbled and looking forward to it. I think we're going to have an interesting session. We certainly have lots on the agenda. We have lots from our previous round and lots of interesting stuff coming up as early as today, it seems.

I wonder if we might just introduce everybody who we're going to have as our new clerk and those assisting us. Michael is back.

Gentlemen, for those of you who haven't met her, I'd like to first introduce Angela Crandall, who will be our new clerk.

You were explaining to me that this will be a transition period.

The Clerk: Exactly. Jean-Marie David will be the clerk of the committee, but he's a new clerk so I will be assisting him for the first few months and then he will be your clerk. I'm with the foreign affairs committee, so we'll be working on both committees for a while, but Jean-Marie will eventually be your clerk.

• (0910)

The Chair: Great.

You all remember Michael Holden, who has been our analyst. He will be assisted by Robert Dufresne as the volume dictates.

We need a motion to bring these analysts on board.

Before we start that, we're going to run through these routine motions, the first of which is for the services of analysts from the Library of Parliament. Then we might have a very quick discussion about where we go from here. If there isn't any other business, let's proceed with the agreed motions.

The first one is pretty routine, so while they're passing it out, let me read it to you. It is that the committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist the committee in its work.

May I have a motion in that regard?

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): I so move.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Does anybody want to have a quick look at this, or will we just go through them one by one?

On reduced quorum, the only difference I see here is that the last time it was three members. For some reason or other, somebody wants us to be allowed to take evidence with four members present.

The other one is when we're travelling and we have witnesses appearing, and some of the committee members don't get there, we're not going to....

Mr. Cannis.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): On the four members, is that standard now? Can the clerk tell us if it's like that with other committees as well, or just our committee?

The Chair: It's hard to say whether it's standard or not because we just started committees this week. I don't have any problem with it.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'd be more comfortable proceeding the way we've always functioned with three members, including one member of the opposition.

The Chair: Mr. Harris.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Does that mean there were three opposition members and no government members?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): No, there was one member of the government.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll respond to Mr. Harris, because he is from the government. We always have the government present when there are committee meetings.

Mr. Richard Harris: The chair is neutral.

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, but the chair also represents the Conservative caucus. So the way we've functioned is to have three members, including one member of the opposition.

Mr. Richard Harris: That doesn't fly. The chair is the chair of the committee representing Parliament, notwithstanding that he's a member of the governing party. He's a neutral member of this committee, or should be, the same as vice-chairs. So when I say "a member of the government", I mean one member of the government sitting on this side in that formula.

• (0915)

The Chair: Mr. Cannis, go ahead.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Chair, I've just been informed that other committees are still holding to the practice of past committees, that being three, and unless there is a specific reason that I haven't heard so far, I would suggest we keep it at three.

The Chair: Mr. Keddy.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: If it's going to be three, then the chair represents the committee. The chair doesn't represent any single party here. The chair is appointed from a party but he represents everyone on the committee. So if it's going to be three, it should be the chair plus three members of the committee with one of those three members being a government member. That's all, if you want

to have three. Otherwise you're going to get down to the chair plus two members of committee.

That's all.

The Chair: That's a reasonable compromise.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: That's all I would say, the chair plus one member of the government and—

The Chair: Three members, one of whom is in opposition, one of whom is in government. Do you have any problem with that?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: No. That's good.

The Chair: Mr. Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I would like to point out something I noticed at the outset. I very politely signalled to the clerk that I wanted to speak, but four or five people spoke before I did. I would like to know whether these proceedings will favour those who move more quickly, or those who tell the clerk they wish to speak. I don't know whether you noticed, but at the beginning of my comments, I very politely asked the clerk to put my name on the list. Yet a number of other members took the floor before me. I would like to see this committee maintain decorum in its proceedings from the very start.

I would like to say that we would prefer to stay with three members. You know that meetings with witnesses are essential. I would not like to see a situation where, for one reason or another, whether it be deliberate or not, the committee is unable to hear witnesses. In many cases, the witnesses travel and it took a lot of work to prepare for the meetings. Out of respect for our witnesses, I would say that three members are enough.

I would also like to make the following comment: since our party leaders have given us the responsibility of sitting on this committee, our primary duty is to be present at the meetings. And if we are present, we need never worry about dealing with a reduced quorum. That is what I hope will happen.

The only difference I would suggest is that there should be three committee members present, including one member of the opposition.

[*English*]

The Chair: Could I take it from that, then, that this would also mean at least one member of the government?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Yes, I hope there will be one. If you wish to include a government member as well, I have no problem with it.

There may be cases where for one reason or another, depending on their strategy at the time, government members might be less interested in hearing some witnesses, and thus not attend the meeting. Please forgive me for saying this, but that is why I have greater confidence in the opposition when it comes to ensuring there are members here in such cases.

[English]

The Chair: We could go all day, and I don't want to go all day. If that's the will of the committee, I think we're going to get a reasonable consensus here. All we'd have to do is change what's in front of us to three, and that, it seems to me, would at least get a consensus.

Before I do that, let me respond to Monsieur Cardin's additional point, and that was being recognized. For those new to this committee, with me as the chair... Our previous practice has been that I would ask the clerk to watch for those who wished to speak. This is not when we're hearing witnesses, but in the normal course of the committee. I'm paying attention to whoever is speaking and I don't always catch who would like to speak.

So if you would like to address the committee, get the attention of the clerk, and the clerk will keep the list so I don't have to do that. I'll just look over and see who's next. At this moment I see Mr. Cannan, Mr. Cannis, and Mr. Harris next on the speakers list. So I will go in that order. But I would also say that just because you're on the list, you don't have to speak if it looks as if we're getting a consensus. Otherwise we'll never get done.

But having said that, Monsieur Cardin, have I interpreted correctly that you are prepared to accept the proposal in front of us, with the minor exception that it's three rather than four? One government, one opposition.

• (0920)

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: What we would like is three committee members present...

[English]

The Chair: Yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: ...including one member of the opposition. That is my motion.

[English]

The Chair: All right. What is written here is “three members present, including one member of the government and one of the opposition”. Is it the same thing?

Mr. Peter Julian: No.

The Chair: So you're saying—

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): We're going to change the rules from last time?

Mr. Peter Julian: No, those were our agreed rules last time, as you know, Dean. Those were our rules. They are the same rules as last time. Why do you guys want to change them?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: There is a slight difference there, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: When there is a lack of quorum there are no votes anyway, so it doesn't really matter.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: There is an important difference in meaning here. If we look at the paragraph entitled “Reduced Quorum”, we read: “[...] provided that at least three members are present, including one member of the opposition, and provided that if no member of the opposition is present 10 minutes after the designated start of the meeting, the meeting may proceed.” Then we come to the section on meetings outside the parliamentary precinct. That means there would be no member of the opposition 10 minutes after the start of the meeting. I say that we must have three committee members at the start of the meeting, including a member of the opposition.

[English]

The Chair: Yes. Again, just for clarification, in the second paragraph to which you've just referred, Monsieur Cardin, that is when we are scheduling meetings out of the parliamentary precinct. This refers specifically to when we're travelling, and the only reason for that is that if we're out and we have witnesses who have come while we're visiting some other country or whatever, they're not sitting there without members should someone, for some reason or other, not make it to a morning meeting.

In any event, I want to repeat that there doesn't seem to be anything nefarious going on here. There are no votes allowed when there is not a quorum. It's just a courtesy to the witnesses that we have this at all, and we were just looking for a little balance.

I'll go back to the speakers list.

Mr. Cannan.

Mr. Ron Cannan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In the spirit of cooperation, I was just going to make a friendly amendment and move that to three members, the way it's written. The fact is that if you're not here, then—in this case, as Mr. Cannis had indicated, three members are standard practice in other committees—he would also be the chair. So we wouldn't have anybody from the government if he was in the chair's position as well.

Just change “four” to “three”, the way it's written, and I'd like to make that friendly amendment.

The Chair: Why don't we just take that and vote on it right now, then.

It is moved by Mr. Cannan 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 three members are present, including one member of the government and one member of the opposition.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'd like to move that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Before we vote, we'll have people speak to that.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We've had a very clear indication from opposition members—from Mr. Cannis, from Mr. Cardin, and from me—that what we want to do is stay with the structure we had, which was a quorum of three, including one member of the opposition. That's been the standard practice. We don't want to deviate from that. So Mr. Cannan's saying he's providing a friendly amendment isn't quite truthful. What he's saying is directly contradictory to what the opposition parties have all indicated.

So we can't accept the motion. What we'll have to do, if you move this to a vote, is defeat this and then move a new motion that says very clearly what has been past practice: three members, including one member of the opposition. Mr. Chair, it makes sense to structure it that way.

Mr. Ron Cannan: Let's just do it: vote.

Mr. Peter Julian: Let me finish, Mr. Chair.

As you represent the Conservative caucus—you're elected by this committee but you represent the government—you do have veto power over meetings, that's certain. What we certainly wouldn't want to see happen is what's happened to a number of committees over the past couple of years, where the government members have simply left and, in that way, shut down the committee. We can't have that, particularly for a file that's as important as trade.

So I think the opposition parties have been pretty clear. We want a functioning committee. It has functioned very well with the past practice, and we want to continue that past practice and not provide some additional procedural possibilities for the government. I would expect government members to be here at committee. If they choose not to be, well, the committee will continue.

• (0925)

The Chair: You are on the list, but we've stepped off the list because we're now dealing with Mr. Cannan's amendment. We have heard one speaker on the amendment, and I think Mr. Julian puts it well. I think that is the point. I don't know if we need to proceed anymore.

Why don't we just quickly move to vote on the amendment, then, and then you can bring another motion, if you'd like, Mr. Julian, apart from the one that's before us; that is, as originally moved, that it was four members and all that. I don't want to get ahead of you, but after we deal with Mr. Cannan's amendment, if it doesn't happen to pass, maybe Mr. Cannis or others might just want to move the original motion.

(Amendment negatived)

The Chair: We're back to the speakers list, and it's Mr. Cannis.

Mr. John Cannis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think—

Mr. Richard Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman...
[Inaudible—Editor]

The Chair: Mr. Brison didn't indicate that he was voting.

Mr. Richard Harris: I thought he put his finger up.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): I did. You'll get to understand my signals; they're like those at auctions.

An hon. member: It's a nervous twitch.

The Chair: Mr. Cannis.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Cardin was speaking, and he did present his case. Maybe he presented it very mildly when he said, if I may quote, "If, for one reason or another". I think what he really meant, Mr. Chairman, for all of us to understand, was that if one member is not here from the government, the meeting just cannot proceed, period.

The best way to address this is... There are two ways, if I may suggest them, based on the original wording. One is to go back to the number of three members that was suggested, and I don't think people are having problems with it; two is to eliminate the words "one member from the government and one member from the opposition". Just leave it as "and one member from the opposition", so that you or whoever is here can begin the committee proceedings. I think that would solve it.

Mr. Julian, I think you will agree—I'm trying to influence some people here now—that we just go back to the number of members, which would be three, and take out the wording "one member from the government". This "one member of the opposition", period, will allow us to start off the committee.

That's my suggestion, sir.

The Chair: We have an amendment from Mr. Cannis that would say "at least three members, including one member of the opposition". Is that correct?

Mr. John Cannis: That's correct.

The Chair: Does anyone want to debate that amendment?

We have Mr. Keddy and then Mr. Cannan on the list.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Cannis, with respect, if you listened to Mr. Julian's argument, it was that the committee would be hijacked, possibly, by members' not showing up, and we wouldn't be able to hear witnesses if you put "one member from the government". If you put the rule in for "one member of the opposition", the same thing can happen: if none of the opposition shows up, then we can't hear witnesses either. So in the interests of fairness—because that's what you're talking about—just make it "three members present". Then the onus is upon all of us to be here. But you can't argue on one side that something might happen from one group and then argue that, for the same thing, on the other side it wouldn't happen somehow.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Julian doesn't argue points without having some sort of—I hate to use the word "scheme"—

Mr. John Cannis: Motive?

Mr. Richard Harris:—motive in mind, and the motive clearly is this. He wants a motion to pass that says that if no government members happen to show up, then the opposition can carry on with the meeting; however, if no opposition member shows up, then the meeting can't go ahead. I see the subtlety of his argument—it's very coy—but the fact is that this creates an unequal situation, and in a committee that maybe has a basic desire to get along, we should start off this session with a sense of fairness.

That would be, to make it fair for both sides—notwithstanding Mr. Julian's wishes—that if none of the three members of the government shows up, the meeting can't proceed, and if a member of the opposition isn't present, then the meeting can't go ahead. The way it is written now—reducing that number to three, as Mr. Cannan suggested—would have created that fairness and the equity in this motion.

That's the point. Let's get started on a good footing, rather than start the fireworks early. That's your choice, but fairness is always a good starting point, Mr. Julian.

• (0930)

The Chair: Mr. Julian, you're next on the list.

Mr. Peter Julian: Oh, I thought we'd be friends, Mr. Harris. I'm surprised that you would go after me.

It's pretty simple. We've had a number of committees from which government members have walked out. In the last Parliament, a number of committees were shut down because government members walked out. There has not been, in the three Parliaments at which I have been present, a single committee meeting at which opposition members have refused to hear from witnesses. Not a single time has that happened, so that's not the problem.

The problem has been that systematically, because of that 200-page manual, you have Conservative members walking out and shutting down hearings. And so unfortunately, because of bad behaviour in the past, yes, we have as opposition members to make sure that the people's business is done. I think it's incumbent on Conservative members to prove that in this committee they don't have the intention of trying to shut things down.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Julian has the floor, followed by Mr. Cannis.

Mr. Peter Julian: I've finished.

The Chair: Mr. Cannis.

Mr. John Cannis: First of all, there's no motive here; I'll put that on the table. I think the motive is to make this committee work. I know when I chaired the committee some years ago, we never had a problem.

In answer to Mr. Keddy's point—and he makes a valid point—I will respond. If one member from the government is not here, the committee, Mr. Chairman, cannot function. There are three other parties sitting in opposition. The wording here is “one member of the opposition”. If every member does not show up, then the committee doesn't function. What you're looking at is one member from three parties—highly unlikely, Mr. Chairman. If that occurs, God help those members in those parties. Each one of us would have to not show up for the meeting not to begin, whereas on the other side, with

all due respect, one member of the government...or if the member from the government does not show up so that we can make the three, then the meeting does not start. The onus really is on us, in response to Mr. Keddy's comment, if I may.

I put that on the floor in a very constructive way. As we have said, Mr. Chair, this committee has worked very well in the past. I think the intent, given these times, is indeed to make this committee work and work well, so that's my reasoning behind the numbers, Mr. Chair.

Thanks.

The Chair: Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have two points. I realize we've been around the tree a couple of times here. I think what Mr. Keddy was saying is if we don't stipulate opposition or government, just three members present, we can hear regardless of who shows up. To Mr. Julian's point, no one could walk out because it's receiving quorum to start hearing evidence. If people still leave, we could still.... This is to start the meeting, so if people leave, then the point is that we could still be able to hear witnesses if people are still present.

As I say, back to Mr. Keddy's point, if the opposition's worried about our not showing up, could we not be concerned about their not showing up? It's just a question—three members, three members.

Thank you. It's never been a problem on this committee.

The Chair: Mr. Brison.

Hon. Scott Brison: One of the practical points I think Peter was referring to is that there is a history here with the government walking out—

• (0935)

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Not in this committee.

Hon. Scott Brison: Not necessarily in this. I can't speak with any memory of this committee, but I have seen it in other committees. It is much tougher to get a coordinated approach among three opposition parties to do that, if we were so motivated, than it is for the governing party. The fact is that this is a check and balance, based on past precedent in other committees, but determined largely by decisions outside those members.

It is a change. If in fact the committee worked well before with the existing rules, I would posit that we can continue with the same rules. We all want this committee. When it comes to issues of trade policy or foreign policy, we want to be as non-partisan as possible. The fact is that the existing rules did not pose a problem in the past, so why would we change them?

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Keddy.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: With respect to what Mr. Brison has said, I think we should be clear: I really don't care what any other committee has done or what has happened at any other committee, I think you have to look at the history of this committee. We've always worked in a fairly collegial manner. We've not walked out on witnesses. Individual members have left the room while there were witnesses, and there have been members who've been rude to witnesses, but we've always had quorum and we've always held the meeting.

I'm not going to belabour this. I say we vote on it and move on. But in the issue of fairness and the issue of the history of this committee—not any other committee, but this committee—as long as there are three members present, then that's equal pressure on everybody. I think if you look at the history of this committee there will be three members present for any witnesses.

I say we vote on it and move on.

The Chair: I think we have a couple more on the speakers list before we call the vote. I'll take your motion and hear our speakers before we go to the vote.

We have Mr. Harris and Mr. Julian on the list.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Richard Harris: If Mr. Brison's argument is to be considered valid, then it's valid that if the opposition members are capable of forming a coalition to try to overthrow a government, for God's sake, they would certainly be able to get together to overthrow a committee meeting, using the same logic as Mr. Brison for validity. There is some history there as well, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: I think I'll pass, Mr. Chair. We can go to the vote.

The Chair: Okay.

Well, we have a motion. Essentially it is to return to previous practice. This is a motion by Mr. Cannis that says 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 three members are present, including one member of the opposition. And the rest of it I won't bother reading, because it's pretty stock text about when we're travelling.

Is that clear to everybody?

Yes, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Could you read the actual motion?

The Chair: Yes, sure: "In the case of previously scheduled meetings taking place outside the Parliamentary precinct, the committee members in attendance shall only be required to wait for 15 minutes following the designated start of the meeting before they may proceed to hear witnesses and receive evidence, regardless of whether opposition or government members are present."

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm sorry, I meant Mr. Cannis's motion.

The Chair: Oh, I'm sorry. It reads like this: "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

three members are present, including one member of the opposition."

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: You have read Mr. Cannis' motion. Earlier, you added that Mr. Cannis also wanted a specific mention to "outside the parliamentary precinct." Thus, within the parliamentary precinct, there would be three members, including one member of the opposition. Outside the parliamentary precinct, we would have three members, including one member of the opposition. If the opposition member is absent, we wait for 15 minutes and then begin the meeting. But within the parliamentary precinct we need to have three members, including one member of the opposition. There is no ten-minute waiting period, there—I would like us to be clear on that. Is that correct, Mr. Cannis?

● (0940)

Mr. John Cannis: That is correct.

Mr. Serge Cardin: I would imagine that anyone who has travelled to be at the committee meeting will be there.

[*English*]

Mr. John Cannis: In good faith, that's what is assumed, Mr. Chairman—and I apologize for intervening—that if the committee is travelling, if you're out somewhere, you would be attending to your duties, as opposed to...

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. John Cannis: That's why I didn't touch upon that.

The Chair: All right. Then we've heard the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Richard Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Chair...

The Chair: Thank you, gentlemen.

I'm sorry, Mr. Harris has a point of order.

Mr. Richard Harris: Are we being recorded, televised?

A voice: Yes, it's being recorded. It's a public meeting.

Mr. Richard Harris: Oh, we are?

The Clerk: It's broadcast, but not on TV; it's audio.

The Chair: You don't have to fix your hair. Be polite.

Mr. Richard Harris: I was just trying to justify all the drawing out of that motion over there; that's all. There had to be a reason.

The Chair: Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: On a point of privilege, Mr. Chair, the NDP has, of course, our designated committee members and also substitute committee members, so I'd like to introduce to members of this committee my substitute, who is Malcolm Allen, the member of Parliament for Welland, in Ontario. I hope you'll welcome him to the committee, because you'll see him quite often.

Mr. Ron Cannan: Are you stepping out now?

Mr. Peter Julian: No, that's not your luck, Ron.

Mr. Ron Cannan: Everybody loves Malcolm.

Mr. Peter Julian: You think I'm tough.

The Chair: We should proceed with these routine motions.

The next on the agenda concerns distribution of documents: that only the clerk of the committee, with adequate notice, be authorized to distribute to the members of the committee any documents, including motions, and that all documents that are to be distributed amongst the committee members must be in both official languages. The clerk shall advise all witnesses appearing before the committee of this requirement.

Is there any debate on that one? It is moved by Mr. Cannis.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one is staff at in camera meetings: that each committee member in attendance shall be permitted to have one staff member attend at any in camera meetings. In addition, each party shall be permitted to have one party staff member attend in camera meetings.

Does anyone want to speak to that? We need to have a motion. It is moved by Mr. Holder.

Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one is in camera meeting transcripts: that in camera meetings be transcribed and that the transcription be kept with the clerk of the committee for later consultation by members of the committee.

Mr. Silva moves this.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Yes.

The Chair: Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Working meals: that the committee hereby authorize the clerk of the committee, in consultation with the chair, to make necessary arrangements to provide for working meals.

Could I have a mover? Mr. Silva again moves that. He didn't want any conflict of interest with people in the food industry.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Witnesses' expenses: that if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation, and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses, not exceeding two representatives per organization, and that in exceptional circumstances payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the chair.

Could I have a mover? Mr. Allison. That's presented.

Does anybody want to debate?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next is priority of legislation: that the consideration and examination of any bill, government or private member's bill, that falls within the express mandate of the committee shall take precedence over any study or non-legislative examination other than questions of privilege. In such circumstances, the non-legislative study shall be deferred until such time as the bill is reported back to the House.

Can I have a mover?

• (0945)

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm not a mover, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Let me have a mover first. Does somebody want to move that?

Mr. Peter Julian: I just have a question for the clerk. I don't believe we've had this in past routine motions.

The Chair: No, that's a new one then. Let's get it moved, and then we can have a debate on it, if you'd like to have debate.

Mr. Harris moves it.

Mr. Julian, you would like to speak to this.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm a little concerned, Mr. Chair, because essentially we haven't had this in the past. I think we've always shown due diligence in our work, both under your mandate and going back to the 38th Parliament under Mr. Cannis's mandate. We've been consistent in doing our duty. This seems to set the committee agenda for us, and I don't believe that's useful or helpful to the committee. We take our responsibilities seriously. I'm a little perplexed as to why this would appear when we've always been very diligent in doing our work.

So in a sense, this would set the agenda for us, and it would mean that the government would essentially be setting the agenda for us by whatever bills it brings forward.

So I don't think it's particularly useful and I don't think we should be adopting this.

The Chair: Mr. Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Chairman, I will use a term that is very dear to me. The committee is sovereign—it is master of its own fate, and it decides on its agenda. Adding this would not be appropriate.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Cannis.

Mr. John Cannis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wasn't going to intervene, but having heard what Mr. Cardin just said, it really doesn't bother me as it's written, because as he stated, we are masters of our own doing. We can in essence decide. Surely, as elected representatives of the people, when a piece of legislation is brought before the committee, we should have the intellectual capacity to judge what we should and shouldn't do as a committee.

So for me personally—I can speak on behalf of our side—it really doesn't bother me.

The Chair: Mr. Keddy.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: I'm in total agreement with Mr. Cannis.

The Chair: All right. Monsieur Cardin.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: When I used the word, “sovereign”, that did not mean I was excluding the ability to think—quite the contrary. The committee will decide on its agenda, according to the importance of the bills referred to it. That is what we have done in the past, Mr. Chairman. We could continue to do the same thing. I would not like to see the legislative agenda imposed on this committee, in a systematic fashion. The committee might be engaged in a study that is just as important as the bill referred to it, and the bill could thus take second place. I simply want the committee to have that freedom.

[English]

The Chair: I have no further names on the list, so I'll put the question on the motion of Mr. Harris.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one concerns motions: that 48 hours' notice shall be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the committee, and that the motion shall be filed and distributed to members by the clerk in both official languages.

Can I have a mover for that motion?

Mr. Cannis.

Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one concerns deferring motions: that for motions requiring 48 hours' notice, the chair be authorized to defer consideration until 15 minutes prior to the adjournment time for the meeting as indicated in the notice of meeting.

I guess we've done that before, haven't we? Anyway, let's get it on the table. I can't recall this one. I think we did this as practice. I don't remember whether it was in the previous set or not.

Is there a mover?

Mr. Keddy.

We have some debate.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: First I have a question, again to the clerk. I don't believe this motion has come forward previously.

The Clerk: I believe it's new to this committee.

Mr. Peter Julian: I disagree quite strongly with this, as I think all members of the opposition should, Mr. Chair. Essentially what it would mean for all motions is that we'd be automatically deferring them to the 15-minute period. We're essentially saying that the chair is authorized to defer consideration until 15 minutes prior... Often there will be motions brought forward by my Liberal or Bloc colleagues that may require more debate. To automatically assume that all motions brought forward should be deferred until 15 minutes prior to the adjournment I don't think makes any sense at all. Certainly our ability as parliamentarians to bring forward motions would be negatively impacted. It essentially means we're limiting debate on motions that are brought forward.

I don't think it's necessary. We've functioned very well through you, Mr. Chair, in the past with this. Since we functioned well in the past, I think we should continue with our current practice, which is that normally the member bringing the motion forward will raise it with you; there's some discussion about when it should be on the agenda. You, Mr. Chair, have been I think very diligent in determining how much debate time might be needed. It has often appeared at different points in our agenda.

I think you've done a very effective job. That's why I moved your election as chair.

• (0950)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Julian.

I think we're on the same point here, but the difference is with regard to notice of a motion, getting it on the table—getting that accepted by the committee—or debating the substance of the motion at length, which could take forever.

One of the problems, which we have had only very rarely in this committee, is being in the middle of something—for example, we have witnesses waiting to appear—and someone at the beginning of the meeting raising a notice of motion; debate ensues, and it's an hour and a half later.

This was only a suggestion that, as a courtesy to witnesses—and that's why we're having a debate—we defer these to the end of the meeting. We hear the witnesses, and if we want to carry on, then I guess we carry on at the subsequent meeting, but at least we have an opportunity to tell witnesses that they might be a little late at the next meeting. I think that's the intent here. It's not to limit anyone's ability to raise motions. It's just that they have, in the past, inconvenienced witnesses who came from some distance, when they have been raised at the beginning of the meeting.

I don't think any motion ought to take more than 15 minutes to debate anyway, and it's all about notice for a subsequent meeting rather than the meeting in progress, in any event. It's just a notice of motion to bring it to a meeting.

This is just for clarification. So that everybody understands where we're going here, that's what it's about.

Mr. Keddy.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is pretty straightforward stuff. It is within the purview of the chair anyway to decide when to hear the motion. You can recognize the motion and hear it in the last 15 minutes or the last five minutes, and the motion is not off the books until it's settled at committee, so it can be carried over to the next meeting.

What it does is prevent, when you have four witnesses sitting here waiting to be heard, any member of committee who has tabled a motion deciding to speak to that motion while the people who may have travelled from across the country have to sit through it all. It's not in any way, shape, or form an attempt not to hear the motion. It's within the purview of the chair, to begin with, to decide when we hear it. He can recognize the motion and say we will deal with this during the last 15 minutes. This just puts in writing what we do in practice.

The Chair: Monsieur Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You are very good at this—you have touched on a point that is very important to me, the presence of witnesses and their commitment to testifying before the committee. Occasionally, we have started debating a motion before the witnesses spoke, and that delayed their comments. At times, we even ran the risk of not hearing what they came to say. I am very aware of that issue.

That brings me to this question: How could we proceed so that the motions moved are not consistently postponed? The motions do take some time. Fifteen minutes is not very long. We need to find a mechanism that makes it possible for motions not to be carried over constantly from one meeting to the next. We know that when witnesses appear before the committee they have spent a long time preparing. In fact, it is quite good of us to consent to the 48-hour notice, because sometimes urgent matters arise and a 24-hour notice would have been practical as well.

I'm trying to think of how we could go about this to ensure we do not carry over debate on motions constantly, while maintaining our respect for witnesses. That is an important problem. I would ask committee members to think very seriously about it, because putting motions off all the time is not something we should be doing. Motions are always fairly important depending on their content. Unless we adopt a more effective mechanism of dealing with them, I fear that some motions will simply be put off for much too long.

● (0955)

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think it's fair to say that under your mandate we haven't had difficulties, because you've taken a very reasonable approach. You've discussed with members motions that are coming forward. The problem of witnesses has not been a problem under your mandate. Under a previous chair it was a problem, and it was often a problem because the government would filibuster motions that were brought forward by the opposition. To be reasonable in all four corners of this committee, I think we work through you and schedule a motion at an appropriate time. You've taken a reasonable approach.

We don't need this motion. To put this motion in assures that we can't have fulsome debate on some motions that will be brought forward from the opposition. Since we've functioned very well under your mandate, not only do I not see a need for this motion; I also think it would be counterproductive to our work, because it means that a Liberal motion brought forward will only have 15 minutes of consideration. To say that maybe at the next meeting we can start off with the motion.... I don't see that loophole within this. Essentially that motion would be scheduled for 15 minutes prior to adjournment at the following meeting. So a Liberal motion that's brought forward would not receive appropriate consideration.

I think we should keep with our current practice, which is working through you, Mr. Chair. You've been reasonable about this, and I think this motion would harm the committee work.

The Chair: I just want some clarity. I thank you for that. I agree very much with what you've said, that it's been a very collegial approach and that it works when we have some consultation beforehand. I just like to avoid surprises, because it's not in the interest of anybody on the committee or of witnesses to have surprise dilatory motions delay the work of the committee.

So that was the intent here. I want to be clear, though, that this is not in any way suggested to limit debate. It's just about the notice of motion of debate, to get it on the table; that's the concern I had. You can debate it again at the next meeting, if the committee so desires. That was the reason for it in this instance; it's just for clarity. I don't mean to change the tenor of the debate here. I just want to clarify where we are.

The next on the speakers list is Mr. Cannis.

Mr. John Cannis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I hope my friend Mr. Julian wasn't referring to my tenor. I thought we had a lot of flexibility at that time.

Mr. Peter Julian: Your tenor was perfect. We had a good first chair and a good last chair.

Mr. John Cannis: Thanks.

Mr. Peter Julian: There were some problems in the middle.

Mr. John Cannis: Okay.

Mr. Chairman, I think the concern here is that once the meeting opens and the witnesses are identified—and as Mr. Julian pointed out, the motions will be dealt with as a second item—if I understand correctly, it's the 15-minute limitation. Is that what it's all about? I wonder, if that 15 minutes wasn't there, whether that would help out all the members in moving forward on this motion. Dealing with it at the end—

The Chair: The whole point was just to not delay the meeting. We want to deal with the motions, as members have a right to bring a motion to the meeting. But rather than take the time of witnesses and the committee at the beginning, just put it at the end. It doesn't have to be 15 minutes; that just seemed to be a reasonable amount of time to allow someone to present a motion.

Mr. John Cannis: So we recognize that at the opening of the meeting there would, first of all, be witnesses A, B, C; secondly, we would have a motion on the agenda.

The Chair: Yes.

● (1000)

Mr. John Cannis: The concern I sense on this side is with the 15 minutes.

Mr. Peter Julian: It becomes the rule.

Mr. John Cannis: I don't know whether there's some flexibility in terms of the 15 minutes. Maybe they'll help us overcome this stumbling block.

The Chair: Well, it just means that the consideration of the motion begins 15 minutes before the end of the meeting; it doesn't mean you have to conclude that discussion. It can carry on to the next meeting ad nauseam, as in some cases it has.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, with respect, it becomes a hard and fast rule. Mr. Cannis has been an excellent chair, and you've been an excellent chair, but I have Mr. Harris, who's very shrewd—I won't use the word “scheming” that he used against me—a very shrewd parliamentarian. Mr. Harris will point to that and say, well, Mr. Chair, we adopted as a committee a routine motion at the beginning of this Parliament that stated that the chair is authorized to put forward consideration until 15 minutes prior to the adjournment time. That means that in the case of any motion coming forward, you're authorized to bring it up there, and that becomes a rule.

Then, if I were a shrewd member of the government—and Mr. Harris certainly is—15 minutes is easy to talk out. This means essentially that we will not have sufficient time to debate any opposition motion, and I would even say any government motion, because it will be easy to talk out the clock.

That's my problem with this. Not only do I not believe we need this; I think it'll be harmful to our work as a committee, because it becomes a hard and fast rule that any shrewd parliamentarian will point to. If today we've adopted this routine motion, it becomes a hard and fast fixed motion through the entire 40th Parliament. It will be detrimental to our work.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Richard Harris: Well, with all due respect to the suggestions that have been put forward, I think perhaps Mr. Julian and others have lost track of the reason for this motion. It is to show respect for the witnesses who have in many cases travelled a long way from home and taken time off work or out of their teaching or whatever to come as witnesses before this committee. The last thing they deserve is to sit here in their chairs while motions are being put forward that could go on ad nauseam. I've seen it—everyone has seen it happen in committees we've been on—and it's very embarrassing.

This boils down to a motion that, if you want to pass a motion that will show respect to any witnesses who come before this committee, you will pass. If you don't want to support that show of respect, then you will defeat it.

There is a possible amendment you could make to it. You could make this motion particular to any meeting in which witnesses were present. In any meeting where there were witnesses present, this would apply; where there were no witnesses present, it's possible, because of the purpose of this, that there could be some flexibility, if there were a compromise there.

Certainly I don't want to sit in any more committee meetings in which witnesses are sitting where there are motions coming up, and at which these folks have to sit around watching a bunch of politicians play, in many cases, some pretty stupid games—in front of witnesses who have come here with a good purpose.

The Chair: That's an interesting twist: that we just add “at meetings where witnesses are waiting” somehow.

I don't think we could do that. Would I be able to call on your wisdom here, Mr. Easter?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): I haven't sat on this committee, Mr. Chair, but we have no such restriction on the committees I'm on, and I agree with Mr. Julian; I think it's a bad idea. You really don't want to limit debate when you're making a decision. The whole purpose is to bring forward a motion, whether it's a government motion or an opposition motion, and give the government direction or make a decision relative to a report. It's extremely important that parliamentarians who have been elected have the full opportunity to debate it as necessary.

I know that Dick is right, in that sometimes games have been played on all sides, but I think the last thing you want to do for parliamentarians is limit debate. It is why, in fact, we're here. We've never, I think, had trouble at previous committees I've been on with witnesses being restricted because we were debating motions. In fact, I think sometimes they like to see that debate, to see that their issues have in fact been heard and listened to and that sides are taken.

I don't know why you just don't take it out. It's certainly not in my committee.

•(1005)

The Chair: Monsieur Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Chairman, I will not repeat what Mr. Julian and Mr. Easter have already said. We can function without this provision regarding the deferral of motions. On the whole, the system has worked well and we should not need to add this.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Keddy, you're the last one on the list.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Call the question, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Or you can withdraw the motion.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: I guess I will take one final kick at the can. I don't think it's a motion that's meant to hold up the committee in any way, shape, or form. It certainly in no way, shape, or form limits debate. It limits debate to 15 minutes at the end of a meeting in which we have witnesses; if there are no witnesses, obviously the motion is going to be debated.

There are a number of players here who have been chairs of committee. I've sat on those committees, and I've been a chair of a committee myself. It's within the purview of the chair, to begin with. All this does is hold it over until another day, but it prevents.... If I'm looking at the witness list and there's a group of witnesses whom, for some reason, we think we shouldn't hear, or the opposition members may think they shouldn't hear, literally they can put in a notice of motion and debate that motion as long as they have the votes. This prevents any motion by anybody at committee from being debated for more than 15 minutes at that meeting, but it doesn't preclude its being debated at the next meeting, if the debate is not over.

The Chair: That's one point on which I can't understand why there's any concern.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: It's precluding the debate.

The Chair: When there's a debate, you can carry on the debate at the next meeting.

In any event, we have had a call for the question, so I'm going to call the question.

(Motion negatived [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The next motion concerns rounds of questioning. The first part, I think, is pretty straightforward.

Yes, the rounds-of-questioning motion is pretty standard. It is that witnesses from any one organization shall be allowed 10 minutes to make their opening statement. During the questioning of witnesses, there shall be allocated seven minutes for the first round of questioning, and thereafter five minutes shall be allocated to each questioner in the second and subsequent rounds of questioning.

I think that's pretty straightforward; it's standard procedure. I would like to just say for new members of this committee that it has been our practice, if we have more than one witness, that we would hear all of the witnesses in sequence and then begin questioning the witnesses jointly, so that we at least get one round of questioning in of all the witnesses. That could be also understood as we address this motion.

Is there any debate on this particular motion?

It was moved by Mr. Allison.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one is slightly different.

Yes, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: I will be moving a motion on the speaking order, but I'll let you introduce it first.

The Chair: Yes, let me just speak to it for a second.

The change in numbers in the House obviously is reflected in the committee. The difference in this particular committee as opposed to the last committee is that there is one more on the government side and one less on the opposition side. The speaking order then reflects the new distribution of the House and of the committee.

What all of this essentially says is that each member will have an opportunity to ask a question before any member has a chance to speak twice. Essentially we'd begin, as we have in the past, with the Liberals asking questions for seven minutes, followed by the Bloc for seven minutes, probably by the NDP for seven minutes, and probably the government party for seven minutes.

In the next round, if it's again at five minutes, it would be the Bloc for five minutes and then the Conservatives for five minutes. That would give everyone in the opposition a chance to speak—well, except for one Liberal, but it still leaves three Conservatives.

The next round would just be a Liberal and then a Conservative until we have heard from each member. We would alternate government and opposition until each member has been heard. But because now there are five Conservative members, at one point we'll

have Conservative, Conservative at the end so that each person has a chance to ask a five-minute question. Then we'll revert back to the start again, should there be time.

That's essentially how it is. I have done the numbers and worked the percentages and the fairness and all of that. It really does, in my view, reflect a fairness in that each person has an opportunity to ask one question before any member gets to ask two questions. The only difference is that the first round of questioning for each party will allow seven minutes, and subsequent rounds will be five minutes.

So I'll state the motion on the order of questions and then open it to debate: in the first round it shall be Liberal, Bloc, NDP, Conservative; questions during the second round shall alternate between opposition members and government members—Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Conservative—based on the principle that each committee member should have a full opportunity to question the witnesses. If time permits, further rounds shall repeat the pattern of the first two, at the discretion of the chair.

Can I have a mover for that motion?

Mr. Cannis moves the motion—

• (1010)

Mr. Peter Julian: Actually, Mr. Chair, I had signalled that I would be moving a motion. I move that we adopt—

The Chair: We just had a mover of this motion, and we're debating it. If you would like to make an amendment, you can go ahead.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I had already indicated to you that I had a motion to bring forward. I had already indicated that to you.

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor. You can move to amend it.

Mr. Peter Julian: Then my amendment is that we strike everything after the introductory phrase for the order of questions and replace it with the official languages committee lineup for speaking order: that witnesses be given ten minutes for their opening statement; that for the first round the following order, for seven minutes, is the official opposition, the Bloc, the NDP, and government; second round, for five minutes, the official opposition, the government, Bloc, NDP; third round, for five minutes, the official opposition, Bloc Québécois, government, NDP; and fourth round, for five minutes, official opposition, government, Bloc, NDP.

The Chair: Mr. Julian has proposed an amendment.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'd like to speak to that, if I might.

The Chair: I'll allow you to speak to that. I think we get the gist of it, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As Mr. Cannis knows, this is exactly the structure we had in the 38th Parliament, when this was a subcommittee and not a standing committee. Essentially it was how we practised in the beginning of the 39th Parliament, until we had a radical shift and switched to something that didn't allow for supplementary questions from all members of the opposition.

It's based on the principle that each party around the table represents a certain proportion of the Canadian public and that the opposition parties represent important points of view, so the rotation is between all four parties. Given that other committees, such as the official languages committee, have maintained that structure, it makes sense to do the same here. It allows every Liberal member and every Bloc member to speak. It allows the NDP, whether it's me or my substitute, Mr. Allen, to speak.

It does mean that the Conservatives get fewer speaking opportunities, but all members of the Conservative Party would be allowed to question as well, provided questioning goes on. But it provides a particularly balanced approach among the opposition parties so that the opposition voices can be heard. That's why I'm proposing what the official languages committee has used and what has worked very effectively for them, and what this committee used to use until we had that shift brought forward by the Conservatives midway through the last Parliament.

•(1015)

Mr. Dean Allison: It's called an election.

The Chair: I think it was an election. In any event, we'll carry on.

Monsieur Cardin, on Mr. Julian's amendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: First of all, if I may, I would point out that there is a difference between the French version and the English version. In the French version, the NDP appears in the second round, but in the English version, it does not.

[English]

The Chair: This is just a translation error. The correct form is the English form.

Could you just clarify that for Monsieur Cardin, that the error is in the translation, not in the intent here?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: First, we need to establish in which version the problem arises. I often tend to agree with Mr. Julian. It's unfortunate that he has left without knowing that, in the French version, his party was indeed mentioned in the second round. That wasn't bad.

I will come back to this later, Mr. Chairman. I am just doing my own calculations.

[English]

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Chair, I'm really just speaking to the Liberals here on this. I believe the speaking order that has been laid out is about fairness. We get elected. To Mr. Julian's point, things were different maybe in the 38th Parliament, but we had an election, and if you would like to have more speaking opportunities, maybe you should elect more members to the House of Commons.

This is clearly based on the fact that all of us take time out of our busy schedules to sit on committee, and there's no reason that the official opposition should lose speaking turns any more than the

government should lose speaking turns. This is a reflection based on what it looks like in the House of Commons.

So my suggestion is that we look at what Mr. Richardson put forward. The fact remains that we all take time out of our busy schedules to prepare for these meetings. Everyone should get an equal opportunity to speak once, before anyone gets a chance to speak twice. As I said, under this current proposal, not only will the government not have an opportunity for people who have prepared to have a chance to speak, but members of the official opposition will not have a chance to speak.

This is a reflection of what happens in the House. Questions are divided that way. I respectfully submit the fact that in committee our numbers are reflected the same way, and every member should have a chance to speak, because we're all here and we all have to do our own work and our homework to be here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Easter.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think Dean has basically made the point. I think we've all sat at committees—not that I want to hear more Conservatives speak, to be honest—but the fact of the matter is that you do go to committees where sometimes, especially when witnesses' time is broken into an hour apiece, some members of the committee, and it's usually on the government side, never get a chance to raise their voice.

What this really does is this. If there's a single member of the NDP at the committee, that committee member will have 12 minutes to speak, while the majority on the committee will have only five minutes. I don't think that's proper balance. The makeup of Parliament is the way it is, and I think every committee member, if at all possible, should be given the opportunity, if they wish, to raise questions and speak with witnesses.

So I would be opposed.

•(1020)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Easter.

That does conclude our speakers list.

Mr. John Cannis: Call the question.

The Chair: I'll call the question. I think minds are made up here. We could continue the debate, but the question's been called.

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: We'll move back to the original motion, and I'll call the question.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, the versions in English and French are completely different, so you have two different—

The Chair: They're not completely different at all. There's a two-word change. It was just a typographical error in the French, where we've typed *Nouveau...démocratique* instead of *libéral*—

Mr. Peter Julian: No, Mr. Chair, because actually—

The Chair: —and added the extra Conservative. I think that's been resolved by the committee.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I have an amendment.

The Chair: I've called the question, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: No, no, Mr. Chair, to be fair, we—

The Chair: I think we've been more than fair. We've given you an opportunity, Mr. Julian. I think I have the sense of where the committee wants to go here, and the question has been called.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I have indicated that there is an amendment.

The Chair: The question has been called, Mr. Julian. You can challenge the chair, but right now we have a question before the committee.

Those in favour of the motion, please raise your hands.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I challenge your ruling.

The Chair: We're in the middle of a vote, Mr. Julian.

Those in favour of the motion as it is written here in English? For clarity, the motion—

Hon. Wayne Easter: The motion as amended, you mean.

The Chair: No, there was no amendment; it's the original motion.

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

The Chair: Mr. Julian, do you want to challenge that?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, there is clear procedural precedence that when members signify an amendment, you acknowledge the amendment and allow the amendment to be brought forward. You don't try to ram through the vote.

Now, here we've had—

The Chair: We have heard your amendment.

Mr. Peter Julian: No, I had a first amendment that I proposed. There was a second amendment that I wanted to bring forward. We very clearly have an inequitable speaking order here. We don't have the ability for a supplementary question. That is a problem, obviously. The fact that we would normally be entitled to two members around this committee, given the results of the election, means that the NDP actually has a lower percentage of speaking time than any other party around the table and per member. There's a fundamental problem here.

When we have a right, according to the formula, of 1.75 or 1.8 members, and we're reduced to being able to intervene once and having no supplementary question, there is a fundamental question of equity. I know that my colleagues in the Bloc and the Liberals would be willing to recognize that if I brought forward another amendment.

Mr. Richard Harris: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Peter Julian: I am suggesting for procedural issues such as this that it's incumbent upon you to recognize what would be a reasonable amendment. I'm not talking about filibustering or a person trying to talk out the clock. I'm simply speaking about a reasonable amendment that allows us to address some inequity.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Peter Julian: If members of the committee are opposed to the proposal I brought forward from the official languages committee, that's one thing, but a reasonable amendment to address that inequity is something I think you as chair should recognize.

The Chair: All right, I've heard that point. We have a couple of people who wanted to address this point.

Mr. Keddy and then Mr. Silva.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Chair, was Mr. Harris first?

The Chair: No, I think we have a speakers list.

Oh, Mr. Harris was first? I'm sorry.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Richard Harris: I had wanted a point of order too.

I don't know what Mr. Julian is doing. Was he making another motion? He made a first amendment, which failed, and then we went back to the original motion, and that passed. What was Mr. Julian just doing? Was he wanting to challenge the chair? He didn't say that. Was he wanting to make another amendment? He didn't say that either.

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, he did.

Mr. Richard Harris: What was the point, other than to waste a little bit of time? This is one of the reasons, Mr. Chair—

Mr. Gerald Keddy: There was no amendment on the motion that passed.

Mr. Richard Harris: This is one of the reasons we wanted to put a motion in to restrict dilatory motions until at least 15 minutes before the close of any meeting.

The Chair: That's fine. I appreciate it.

Mr. Keddy, did you have something you wanted to add?

Mr. Silva.

● (1025)

Mr. Mario Silva: The point has already been made. I'm a little bit unclear. If there's a motion that has already been approved...you can't amend motions that have been approved, unless you want to bring up a notice to the committee that you want to have a different motion.

The Chair: I wanted to see if Mr. Julian wanted to challenge the chair. He had a point to make and I think he's made it. I think we've heard the point and we're going to have to let it go at that.

Mr. Peter Julian: I've made my point, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Do I sense a consensus of the committee that we can move on?

Mr. John Cannis: Indeed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Julian. I'm sorry that we weren't able to accommodate that one.

I think that does it, doesn't it? That's it for routine motions.

Mr. Cannis had something to add, and I think we also wanted to have a quick look at where we go from here in terms of Tuesday.

Mr. Cannis.

Mr. John Cannis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just wanted to quickly ask you if and when we could have the minister here for the supplementary estimates presentation to the committee and if it could be as soon as possible.

The Chair: I asked the same question, Mr. Cannis, just for the information of the committee. Let me give the floor to clerk for a moment, and she might explain.

Oh, I'm sorry, Jean-Marie.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean-Marie David): The supplementaries are being examined by the foreign affairs committee for the international trade branch, so this committee does not have any supplementaries.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Angela Crandall): All of the supplementary estimates are referred to the foreign affairs committee. The department is the Department of Foreign Affairs, and international trade is a branch of it, so the House refers the supplementary estimates to the foreign affairs committee.

Mr. John Cannis: Given that we are a standing committee, I thought we would have that privilege.

An hon. member: Do we have the right?

An. hon. member: We do have the right to call the minister.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Angela Crandall): We don't have an order of reference. That's all I'm saying. The committee can study the subject matter of the supplementary estimates, but the committee does not have an order of reference to study the estimates per se.

Mr. John Cannis: Can we call the minister, Mr. Chairman? Can the clerk clarify that?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Angela Crandall): Certainly. The committee can always call the minister.

The Chair: Technically, I think the point is that you certainly have a right to call the minister at any time you want, but the minister isn't obligated to attend. I'd leave that to the discretion of the minister should the committee decide in its wisdom that it wants to invite the minister.

We have another couple of speakers on the list, but before we get to that, I don't want to run out of time before we decide what we might do next week. We did have a brief chat amongst some of the members prior to the meeting. It was suggested, because we have a number of things coming up and because we have a number of new members on the committee, that we might start on Tuesday with departmental officials giving us an overview of the department. Then it was suggested that this might include those officials who have been involved with the EFTA agreement, because that is before the House and, one would presume, is soon going to come to this committee.

Mr. Ron Cannan: We're voting at three o'clock.

The Chair: Yes, there's a vote today at three o'clock.

We would be able to give notice to the department that at the Tuesday meeting we would like to have a departmental briefing, perhaps for the first hour, and then an EFTA briefing following that.

If the committee determines that they want to have witnesses, I just think it's fair to the clerks and to those witnesses that we give as much notice as possible. I'm not suggesting this or leading the committee, but if it is the committee's wish to hear witnesses on the EFTA agreement, although we have already heard witnesses on it, we could do that on Thursday and allow sufficient notice to witnesses so they could get together and have a week to go.

In any event, I don't mean to lead the committee. It's whatever you want to do.

We have a speakers list here of Monsieur Cardin, Mr. Julian, and Mr. Keddy, and then we might just have a little discussion on future business.

Monsieur Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Chairman, you are aware that there are two official languages here, and that interpretation does take a little time. When a vote is called—something that is extremely important—I would like the chair to pause for a few seconds. I checked with my colleague, who did have the opportunity to hear you call for the vote. However, I have to say that I did not hear you call for a vote. In any case, we agree on the fact that we did not hear you ask who was against the motion. It wasn't very clear to me. If ever I had to chair a committee in the future, I would take that time when necessary. If I worked as quickly as you do, Mr. Chairman, many people would probably forget to vote. I just wanted to point this out.

• (1030)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for your comment. I appreciate it. I'll ask the clerk to give me a little tug, too, to give you that time and consideration.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, we'll come back to the estimates in a moment, but I would like to move that we set up the routine motion that was missing: a steering committee for this standing committee, and that the steering committee be composed of the chair and one representative from each of the Conservative, Liberal, Bloc, and NDP parties.

The Chair: Are you moving a motion to that effect?

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Julian has moved a motion that we have a steering committee composed of, as he indicated, one member from each party. Was that the notion?

Mr. Peter Julian: It would be the chair, of course, and then one representative from each party.

The Chair: We may or may not have had a steering committee in the past. To address this, we have the motion on the floor right now, and I just want to give an indication of where we've been.

I don't know if we even did set up a steering committee last time around. I found we didn't really need one. On many of the matters that were going to be discussed, whether it was agenda or matters normally discussed at a subcommittee—if that was your intent, Mr. Julian, to discuss agenda or future business of the committee, or whatever—I found that we were generally able to receive consensus around the table and allow everybody's input into establishing those things and we didn't really need a subcommittee. Rather than have a subcommittee, we let the whole committee decide these matters in open consideration.

I just add that. That's the reason we didn't, and that's the reason I didn't include one today, because we didn't seem to need one in the past. But we have a motion on the floor and we'll welcome speakers to debate whether we want to have a steering committee and whether it should be formed in the manner proposed by Mr. Julian.

I had Mr. Keddy, Mr. Allison, Mr. Cannis, and Mr. Cardin on the previous list. We will now have a new list based on Mr. Julian's motion.

Did you want to speak to the motion?

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, please, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You start the debate on your motion to have a subcommittee.

Mr. Peter Julian: We did have a steering committee under Mr. Cannis's mandate in the 38th Parliament. It worked very, very well. It actually saved us a lot of time at the committee level because the parties were able to sit down and agree on an agenda beforehand.

In the 39th Parliament, we did set up a steering committee. Your predecessor essentially stopped the practice of having the steering committee meet. In every Parliament, we've set up a steering committee. It would save an enormous amount of time to have a steering committee meet and agree on the agenda, so it makes eminent sense to do that. In other committees I've been part of, such as the transportation committee, having the steering committee has meant saving committee time.

If our concern, as the Conservatives have said, is about having witnesses brought forward and ensuring that we're maximizing our time with witnesses, it makes a lot more sense to discuss the agenda and the procedure with the representative of the Liberal Party and the Bloc, and the Conservatives will be there as well, and the NDP, and you. In that way, we hammer out that consensus and bring it forward to the committee. It saves an enormous amount of time and it allows for us to move forward and do all the work that we need to get done. Since we've set it up in every single Parliament, it makes sense to set it up for the 40th Parliament.

The Chair: My mother used to say, if everyone jumped off the bridge, would you jump off the bridge?

Who is next? Mr. Holder.

• (1035)

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I'm trying to understand Mr. Julian's logic, and I'm going to speak against this motion.

Mr. Julian made the comment that, through the chair's leadership, things have run very well. Based on that, there were several things that he felt should just be kept the same. So from my standpoint, I have tremendous confidence in this chair, as I think the committee does.

My mom said something else: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. I think she made that up. My point would be that if it's working well, I love the spirit of inclusiveness within this committee, and as the new person, not just to Parliament but to this committee, the idea of participating in a more fulsome way would be appreciated. From that standpoint, I absolutely endorse the spirit of full participation, and not to drag on, because my concern about politics, as someone who doesn't have that as a background, is that after it's all said and done, there's a lot more said than done.

From that perspective, I would suggest that we not proceed with the steering committee. Thank you.

An hon. member: Hear, hear!

The Chair: We'll soon have a second meeting going on here, Mr. Julian. You're missing the debate on your motion here by having sidebar meetings.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'll be reading the transcripts with a lot of interest.

The Chair: Do you have a written motion that we could have in front of us?

Mr. John Cannis: I want to speak on the motion.

The Chair: I just wanted to have the makeup of the committee clear, as well as the.... There seem to be two parts of it: one that we would have a steering committee, and secondly, the makeup of the committee. I think there might be some difference of view there.

Mr. Cannis.

Mr. John Cannis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm always pleased how my friend Peter Julian refers to how we ran the committee some years ago. It was a subcommittee, Mr. Chairman, of the committee on foreign affairs and international trade under the Honourable Jim Peterson at that time, and we did work well. I sensed that, and it was one of the reasons I was enticed to seek to serve on this committee as well. I'm sensing that we will be working very well.

I'm torn between one and the other and I'll tell you why. I had the honour of chairing the committee on national defence and veterans affairs, now known just as the national defence committee. As much as we had a steering committee formally on paper, we also discussed the agenda amongst members, and we really made great progress. I'm sensing that we could do the same here as well. We could elect a steering committee, for the sake of being effective and efficient. In my view, it's an excellent exercise, a positive exercise of exchange when we do set the agenda collectively here from all parties, giving us an opportunity to put our thoughts on the table, agree to disagree, however it is. At the end of the day we walk away with an agenda.

I'm torn right now between one or the other. Maybe we're going to go towards a steering committee. The option I would like to see is for us to discuss the agenda, and as you said earlier, we can take half an hour, an hour, or whatever it takes, to plan collectively together. I'm sure we'll find a way to get on the same page together, sir. I'm leaning towards that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Silva.

Mr. Mario Silva: Mr. Chair, I've been vice-chair of committees where we had steering committees, and all of the things that were discussed at steering committees were also discussed again at the full committee. So it was just a repeat of the same thing.

I think that if it's needed, we could always revisit this issue in the future and call for one. But at the moment, if there hasn't been one, and there's no need at the moment, then we should not have a steering committee. If members in the future wish to have one, they could always call one.

My experience may be different from that of other members, but it's been basically a repeat of the same thing.

Mr. Richard Harris: Can we call the question?

The Chair: There's been a call for the question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: I asked to speak earlier. My name was probably taken off the list.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, I won't limit debate. Carry on. You have the floor now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Last time, we had a steering committee. Occasionally matters can be dealt with fairly quickly and the committee can come to a decision, but sometimes the committee does decide some matters still need to be settled and refers them to the steering committee.

The fact of having a steering committee can make it possible for the committee to refer a matter to it if it so wishes. At times, the steering committee ends up discussing matters that have to be discussed all over again when they come back to the full committee, since some representatives of the parties did not do their jobs.

The steering committee is a necessary tool that we have to use properly, when we need it. It is often the full committee that refers a matter to the steering committee. I would like us to come back to what we had last time, and use the steering committee when we need it.

• (1040)

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Harris: There's a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Cannis.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Chairman, I'll add a caveat to this proposal from Mr. Julian that might help us move forward. We could possibly look at setting it up and utilizing it, should we wish to in the future, upon majority approval. If we can't find ways to resolve our

differences and agree to a witness list, for example, or whatever business we are planning, Mr. Chairman, then maybe we'll go back.

I see it the opposite way. It really doesn't make sense. If you can't find common ground at a meeting, how are we going to find common ground at a steering committee? I'm only saying this so that we can move on. Time flies, and it's the last order of business, I think.

My suggestion is to strike the committee and use it if need be, with a vote within the committee if we can't put a proper agenda forward.

The Chair: What about "at the call of the chair"?

Mr. John Cannis: That's fair.

The Chair: All right. We have an amendment to Mr. Julian's motion. The motion, with Mr. Cannis' amendment, would now be that a subcommittee on procedure and agenda be created, including the chairman of the committee and one member from each party, to be called at the call of the chair.

We'll vote on the amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you gentlemen. I think that is showing good spirit.

Oh, I'm sorry, Monsieur Cardin, did you get that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: I just wanted to know where we are, exactly.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Cardin.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I do think Mr. Cardin is raising an important point.

The Chair: Oh, I agree absolutely. I just get so excited when we have consensus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: When it comes to amendments and the general discussion, it is very important that all committee members be aware that a vote has been called.

Sometimes, a member wants to move an amendment that is somewhat dilatory in nature, or that does not really make sense. That is something different. Earlier, I said that when a committee member wanted to move an important amendment he or she should be able to do so. The same goes for votes. We should perhaps retake those votes. I understand that my colleagues from the Bloc did not know a vote was being called.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, we've heard that.

Mr. Peter Julian: Courtesy.

The Chair: Well, we could all pay attention, couldn't we.

Let's move on. I think we still have a couple of minutes. I did give a brief discussion of potential subjects for next week. I'll go around the table to get your thoughts on where the committee would like to go next week. This will be our steering committee meeting, if you will. I want to get the feeling from the committee, to try to develop a consensus for moving ahead.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Chairman, I think the European free trade agreement is front and centre right now. As the debate is unfolding, in my view and on behalf of my team, it would be a top priority right now.

•(1045)

The Chair: Monsieur Cardin, input for next week?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Chairman, if we look at the motions we have just passed, it's the government's Bill C-2, which was passed at second reading. That bill would thus be referred back to the committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: We will begin with that next week, and then we will be able to provide you with a list of issues to be discussed down the line.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. I might add, as well, that if we are going to proceed in this direction, I would request that committee members bring a list of potential witnesses. As a matter of fact, you might get those in as soon as possible, even by the end of business tomorrow, so the clerks have time to reach these witnesses to see if they are available.

Let's start there. Get them in as soon as you can. We won't have a cut-off for hearing witnesses.... If there is a growing consensus that we're going to move to EFTA next week, we'll want to hear witnesses as early as Thursday. To give them adequate time, may I ask members to submit their lists of potential witnesses to the clerk. The clerk will determine who we will hear and in what order.

We have a bunch of people who want to talk. I think we're moving around the table to Mr. Julian first, and then Mr. Harris, and Mr. Silva.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I think Mr. Cannis has raised the issue of estimates and the minister. I agree with him that this should be our first priority. I know you had spoken earlier about having a departmental briefing. I think that's something we could actually set up outside of the bounds of the committee for new members who want to get a briefing from the department. They could certainly do that on the side. But with respect to the estimates, I agree with Mr. Cannis that they are the utmost priority, and getting the minister here.

So what Mr. Cannis has said and Mr. Cardin has said—

The Chair: You can't speak for Mr. Cannis, but you can speak for Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If I may continue, Mr. Cannis talked about estimates and Mr. Cardin talked about EFTA. I would agree that those really are two priorities. Certainly we have a number of witnesses we'd want to bring forward on EFTA.

So in a sense, our agenda for next week is already there if we're looking at Tuesday, the minister and estimates, and Thursday, EFTA.

The Chair: Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I know we've heard witnesses on EFTA, and I suspect that at some point there should be a motion to bring forward all that testimony. My question is how many more witnesses do we want to call back if we bring all that information back as testimony?

I just present that as a possible option. We can discuss that; I know we're getting late in the day here.

It's not that we don't have the information. We can bring that all back from the last Parliament. It may cut down on the time of bringing back witnesses to say the same thing as they said last time.

I just present this to the committee as a possible option. Once again, maybe the new members will want to hear some witnesses, but I don't think we need duplication. We can defer that to the committee to decide what they want to do.

The Chair: Mr. Keddy.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: I agree with Dean on this. We've heard a lot of witnesses on EFTA. There's been a lot of work.

Probably for the benefit of all the committee members, especially the new members, the first thing we should do is have the clerk prepare a package on EFTA, on the debate that occurred and the witnesses who were heard. If we could get that fairly quickly, then all members could get up to speed on the bill. It's before the House now.

The chair will need to try to arrange a time. We should probably have the minister here. We do have a busy agenda. There are a number of trade agreements before us. We've already gone through EFTA from beginning to end, really. It hasn't passed through the House.

So if members have certain issues they want to dwell on with regard to the EFTA agreement, maybe we could take a committee meeting or two and look at those, but really this bill should be coming back to the House ASAP for a vote.

•(1050)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Keddy.

Did you want to add something, Mr. Cannan?

Mr. Ron Cannan: I have the same general sentiment, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Cannis.

Mr. John Cannis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me clarify my request with respect to having the minister here. I've said in the past and I'll say again that no matter who's in government, there's no sense in having the minister for the sake of having the minister. We know that their schedules are quite busy.

What I'm suggesting to you, Mr. Chairman, is that we begin to notify the minister. It's highly unlikely that we're going to have him within a week—two, maybe—but to me, we're just setting out an agenda. Unless we're asking the minister to come and give us a briefing on the department, which is highly unlikely, I believe it would be more advantageous to all of us to hear a briefing from the department even before the minister arrives, or to engage with the EFTA legislation.

So on the minister's request that I put to you, sir, it's a priority, but it's not your first or second priority, if I may place it as such. Just map it out and send notification so that the minister can plan his schedule.

The Chair: I'm going to wrap this up, because I think there are two things we have to do here. One is that I think we have a general consensus that we would start next week, on Tuesday, with a briefing from department officials—if I could ask the parliamentary secretary to request that, and the clerk—on the department generally, concluding with a departmental briefing on EFTA.

Then we would proceed on Tuesday with the calling of witnesses. I will require a motion for that from the committee. I would ask members to get their lists in so that we can begin hearing witnesses on Thursday next. By the close of the meeting on Tuesday next week, I think we'll have a sense of how many witnesses the

committee wants to hear. I would like you to put your minds to that, how long you think it will be necessary to debate EFTA. Perhaps we can come to a consensus on that. Then at the conclusion of that debate, we might then request the minister to appear before the committee, once we have concluded the EFTA debate.

Am I getting a consensus on that?

Mr. John Cannis: Yes.

The Chair: Okay, with that general consensus, I would ask for a motion to call witnesses.

Could you get a wording for that?

The Clerk: Can we just agree to this?

The Chair: Do I have agreement on that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Fine, we have agreement. We'll proceed on that basis.

Mr. John Cannis: Hear, hear!

The Chair: I want to thank you for a good start, folks, and I hope we can do this again on Tuesday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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