



House of Commons  
CANADA

## Standing Committee on Finance

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FINA • NUMBER 001 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, February 3, 2009**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. James Rajotte**

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## Standing Committee on Finance

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

•(0905)

[*English*]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean-François Pagé):** Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

[*Translation*]

I am ready to receive motions for the position of Chair.

[*English*]

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

Monsieur Pacetti.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to nominate Mr. James Rajotte for the Chair position.

[*English*]

**The Clerk:** Are there any other motions?

It has been moved by Massimo Pacetti that James Rajotte be elected as chair of the committee.

[*Translation*]

Are there any other motions?

[*English*]

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

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare Mr. Rajotte duly elected.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Clerk:** I am now prepared to receive motions for first vice-chair.

[*Translation*]

In accordance with Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the Official Opposition.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** I'll move Mr. Pacetti.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Mike Wallace that Massimo Pacetti be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

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

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare Mr. Pacetti duly elected.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Clerk:** I am now prepared to receive motions for second vice-chair.

[*Translation*]

In accordance with Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be member of an opposition party other than the Official Opposition.

Mr. Carrier.

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** I would like to nominate Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest.

[*English*]

**The Clerk:** Are there any further motions?

[*Translation*]

Robert Carrier moves that Jean-Yves Laforest be elected second vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any other motions?

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC)):** Good morning, everyone. Thank you very much for my election as chair of this committee.

I want to congratulate the first and second vice-chairs and welcome everyone to the committee.

We will go right to routine motions. Just as a bit of background, I did chair the industry, science and technology committee in the last Parliament, a committee that I thought worked very well together. I will certainly endeavour to work with all of you to be as fair, objective, and unbiased as possible to make this committee function well.

Obviously, finance will receive a lot of attention with the economic conditions we're presently in, so I look forward to working with all of you on some serious and challenging issues.

I think we should get right to routine motions. I believe you all have a copy of them before you. My understanding is that these were the motions adopted by this committee within the last parliamentary session. Obviously, members can choose to adopt these or amend these as they wish. My recommendation is that we just go down the routine motions.

First of all, so we can have the analysts sit with us, there is the service of analysts from the Library of Parliament. Can I have someone move that motion?

Mr. Dechert.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Secondly, we have the subcommittee on agenda and procedure: that the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be composed of the chair, two vice-chairs, and a member of the opposition party.

**A voice:** The other opposition party.

**The Chair:** That's correct, the other opposition party.

Mr. Wallace.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, given that I was on the committee last time, and with the issues facing the finance committee and the issues facing the whole country, my preference is that we deal with the subcommittee on agenda and procedure as a committee of the whole. That way we all have our say on where we go and who we have as witnesses. That is my first preference. I'm happy to hear what other members have to say about that.

If there is a need for a subcommittee—and I've just stated I'm not sure there is—I think we should make it a little bit simpler and have the subcommittee composed of the chair, our parliamentary secretary, and a member of each of the opposition parties. Everybody would be represented there. We would be represented by our parliamentary secretary.

I don't know how you want to handle this, Mr. Chair. I don't mind taking a vote on having committee of the whole first, and if that fails, that would be my second approach. That's based on my experience from being here the last number of years.

**The Chair:** Mr. Wallace is proposing that we do not require a subcommittee, that we handle future business within committee of the whole.

Mr. Pacetti.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In my experience, we haven't really used the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. I just don't like the idea of eliminating it, because there are times where the subcommittee is used because we have too many issues. It's just to have a smaller group so that we can reduce the number of ideas to a more manageable number so we can present them to the committee of the whole. In the last two years I think we had two or three meetings of the subcommittee, so I would not like to see it eliminated.

But I think this committee has always worked collegially and we present most of the ideas to the committee of the whole, and that's why it's worked quite well.

• (0910)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Mulcair, and then Mr. Laforest.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Chair, we really see no reason not to strike a subcommittee at all. As the first vice-chair aptly said just now, if a problem arises, there is no reason why we can't work together if we have to. However, this is simply a matter of being efficient. It's easier to convene meetings of the subcommittee and all four parties are represented. We have to settle this matter fairly quickly. I don't see any reason not to strike a subcommittee. Historically, this committee has not encountered many procedural problems. I would much prefer striking this subcommittee because if a problem were to arise, we would still have the option of taking the matter to the main committee.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Merci.

Monsieur Laforest.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** I totally agree with Mr. Mulcair's and Mr. Pacetti's positions. I have nothing further to add, except to say that if we need this subcommittee, then we had better strike it right away. If there is no need for it to meet, then that's fine, but at least if we need it later and we haven't set it up, then it will be harder to do then. I think it would be better for us to vote against this motion.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Wallace.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Based on that, obviously I'm not getting any support for not having a committee, so I'll move that the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be constituted and that it be composed of the chair, the parliamentary secretary, and a member of each of the opposition parties.

**The Chair:** It would be the chair, the two vice-chairs, a member of the other opposition party—Mr. Mulcair—and the parliamentary secretary.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** On the third issue, reduced quorum, the motion is that the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present, provided that at least three members are present, including a member of the opposition.

Mr. Menzies.

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Macleod, CPC):** In the spirit of cooperation, which we seem to be working incredibly well with this morning, Mr. Chair, and maybe it's your guidance that's actually bringing that—not that there was anything wrong with the last chair.... I would like to suggest—and certainly the premise of it is accurate—that if it provided that at least four members were present—and I think it should be one member from all of the opposition parties represented here—I think it would be a fairer process for everyone, rather than having just three members. I notice that it says “hold meetings to receive and publish evidence”. I'm not sure if it's necessary to have “publish” in there. I'm not sure if it's necessary or not. Everything that's relayed here is basically on the public record anyway. I don't know if it's redundant.

My obvious suggestion is that we expand it to have four members present from all of the parties.

**The Chair:** So your recommendation is to say that at least four members be present, including a member of each political party.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** Each recognized party.

**The Chair:** Each recognized party.

Mr. Mulcair.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** I totally agree with Mr. Menzies. This way, no one feels wronged. I think it's an excellent idea.

**The Chair:** Do you agree, Mr. Laforest?

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** No, I do not agree.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Pacetti.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just quickly, my comment would be that this would not happen very often. I can only see it happening when we're having an enormous number of meetings during the pre-budget consultations and there are votes taking place and we have an agreement that maybe one or two of us should hang back and stay in, out of courtesy to the witnesses.

So it doesn't happen that often. I don't see why we have to increase the number of members. It's not binding for passing motions; it's only to receive and publish evidence. And I think that having three members, and one member of the opposition, is completely fine. I don't think we need to amend it.

So I will be voting against Mr. Menzies' motion.

● (0915)

**The Chair:** Is there further discussion?

Mr. McCallum.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Can I just ask what the rationale is. What was wrong with the one we had before? I'm not quite sure why we want to make this change.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** Well, I think it's just a matter of making sure that all parties are represented.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Oh, I see.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** What if they were hostage to Thomas' television schedule?

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** No, I didn't say that!

We need a voice. All members are representing their constituents, and all members should be able to represent their constituents here.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Okay, I'm fine with it. I hadn't thought it through.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Laforest.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** We disagree with the motion, mainly because when witnesses are scheduled to testify, a member of each party must be present before the meeting can begin. For example, if Mr. Mulcair of the NDP has not yet arrived for the meeting, then we can't start, since he is the only representative of his party. That will create a problem. We should reconsider, because this decision will only lead to delays.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I just want to emphasize that my understanding is that this motion is only in the case of reduced quorum. So if we have quorum....

It's my understanding that this committee in the past—and you can guide me on this—had quorum at almost every meeting. So this motion only takes effect in the case of reduced quorum.

Mr. McKay.

**Hon. John McKay:** You're right, the point being that it is almost never used.

But effectively it makes the committee hostage to one party, and there's usually nothing going on here. Effectively what it means is that if somebody is 20 minutes late, the committee can't start.

**An hon. member:** Yes.

**The Chair:** In the case of a reduced quorum.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** It's out of respect for witnesses; it's not out of respect for us.

**The Chair:** Okay, we can go to a vote or have further discussion.

Mr. Wallace.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The definition of a reduced quorum is four people. Is that not correct?

**The Chair:** It depends on what we adopt.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** No, but under this motion....

What's quorum normally? What's the normal quorum? Is it seven? So if we have seven people here, regardless of which party they're from, the meeting can start. Is that correct?

**An hon. member:** Yes.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Right.

So then if there's a reduced quorum, if there are only four people here, based on the motion that's being presented, at least each party needs to be represented. Is that correct?

**An hon. member:** That's correct.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** So the chances that we only have four people at a finance committee meeting in Canada are pretty slim, based on our experience.

So this would only be on a rare, rare occasion, based on my experience. I'm going to support the motion that the parliamentary secretary put forward, because it makes sense that if we only have four, each party should be represented at it.

Thank you very much.

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

Monsieur Laforest.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** That would happen only on very rare occasions. However, when the day comes that witnesses have travelled here at taxpayers' expense, then, as you stated earlier, the Finance Committee will be under intense scrutiny. We could be leaving ourselves open to some criticism. When this happens, these witnesses will rightly be in a position to say that the Finance Committee made a bad decision today.

**Mr. Robert Carrier:** Mr. Chair, the comparison with the standard quorum is somewhat lame. The proposal to allow a reduced quorum would mean that the presence of one member from each opposition party would be required. It's possible that someone could be late and that the committee could still function. However, if we agree to this motion for a reduced quorum—and this situation could very well arise—and if we have to cancel the meeting because of the requirement that one member from each party must be present, this would result in unnecessary delays for the witnesses who have taken the time to come here. If we agree to this reduced quorum, then we would have to wait until we had a regular quorum in order to start the meeting. This suggestion is impractical.

• (0920)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay. Merci.

Mr. Pacetti.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have no wish to repeat what has already been stated, but it's important to clarify that this applies only in cases where we receive and publish witness submissions. It has nothing to do with votes on motions. The aim is to ensure that we show more respect for the witnesses. In the past, we encountered some problems during pre-budget consultations. I believe that was the only time that we did not have a quorum. In my opinion, the quorum should remain at three members.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll call the vote on the amendment as proposed by Mr. Menzies to have at least four members present, including a member of each recognized party.

(Amendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** Now we'll go to the motion as amended.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** Is there a chance to add something?

**The Chair:** To this motion?

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** To the reduced quorum motion we're dealing with. It's to do with meetings that are out of this precinct.

**The Chair:** Do you want to do that before you vote on the amended motion?

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** Can we do it all at once, or do we want to do it in a second...?

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** I think this is a case where the opposition shouldn't be opposed to this. As Monsieur Carrier and Monsieur Laforest were saying, this is out of respect for our witnesses.

In the case of previously scheduled meetings taking place outside of the parliamentary precinct, committee members in attendance shall only be required to wait 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.

Not that we've had much opportunity to travel, but ordinarily we would. There's always a challenge of making sure we can hear witnesses, that we don't wait for half an hour or an hour to have all the members there.

**The Chair:** Do you want to do this as the next motion, then?

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** If we can. A separate motion is fine.

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

(Motion as amended agreed to)

**The Chair:** Did everyone understand Mr. Menzies' motion?

Do you want to read it again, Mr. Menzies?

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** The motion is that in the case of previously scheduled meetings taking place outside of 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.

**The Chair:** Is that acceptable?

Mr. Pacetti.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** I'm not sure about the purpose of having to wait 15 minutes. When we travel with the pre-budget consultation we're on a pretty fixed schedule. A lot of times we have seven or eight witnesses for one panel, and 15 minutes may cause us to run late. Again, somebody is going to get penalized, and usually it is the witnesses.

Out of respect for the witnesses, I don't see the need. I think we work collegially. I don't see the point of waiting 15 minutes when it's not necessary. I think we should leave it as is.

When we travel we're not allowed to present motions. We're working out of respect for witnesses, not ourselves. If one of the members decides to be late, it's on the record. It's too bad, we start. We end up taking that 15 minutes away from witnesses is what I'm saying.

**The Chair:** Mr. Menzies, and then Mr. McKay.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** Just to clarify, that's the outside limit. I would suggest we start on time. That's not the purpose of this, just to have it that we're not waiting for one of our members and holding up.... After a maximum of 15 minutes, the chair then moves on, preferably immediately. This is just to put a limit on how long we are obliged to wait for one member of this committee.

• (0925)

**The Chair:** Okay, thank you.

Mr. McKay has the floor.

**Hon. John McKay:** If I understand your motion correctly, Ted, it is to mean that effectively outside of the parliamentary precinct, there is no quorum after 15 minutes. So if in fact two people showed up from one party, we'd start.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** And we've done that before in the last pre-budget consultations—

**Hon. John McKay:** Well, we may have done it before, but I want to clarify the motion. So if two Conservative members show up, it's automatically a committee meeting.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** Yes, with a maximum of 15 minutes waiting for anybody else, and then we hear the witnesses. They've gone out of their way. We're travelling. It's to make sure we don't have to sit for an hour waiting for one of us to show up.

**Hon. John McKay:** Yes, I understand, but the implications become a little silly if you play it out.

**The Chair:** Mr. Pacetti.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** There is no quorum when we travel, so how do we determine that we have to wait for somebody? I ask this because it's happened in the past, when we were expecting a member but we realized he had gone back to Ottawa. So we're going to be wasting 15 minutes waiting for somebody when he's not going to ever show up. I don't see the need to have that motion.

What is quorum? Is it dependent on how many people showed up the night before, or how many people were on the plane? We've had situations where people have come on the plane and then taken another plane and gone back to Ottawa, and we've not known how many people we were travelling with. And I've been at committees where there have been two people. Once you have the chair and somebody else, I think that's it, it's time to go. It's up to the members to be on time.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** I absolutely agree, but this gives the chair the right to continue, and if he chooses to wait the 15 minutes, then we actually have a bylaw, if you will, or a motion in place to give him the authority to proceed.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Here, he has to wait 15 minutes. The way you have your motion—sorry, Mr. Chair, but you have to wait 15 minutes. What I'm saying is to leave it up to the discretion of the chair. That's what you have a chairman for.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** The wording is, “shall only be required to wait for 15 minutes”.

**Hon. John McKay:** So if nobody shows up, then James carries on—

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** Yes, as he could.

**Hon. John McKay:** James is liking this.

**The Chair:** Well, one option I can suggest is perhaps you might want to negotiate with other parties or see whether there is support wording, and then bring the motion back. We can always adopt a motion at a future time, unless you want to have the vote today. But my suspicion is there may be some agreement, if you can negotiate off-line on this.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay. Is everyone okay with this motion on the distribution of documents? It's in both official languages?

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

**The Chair:** Working meals.

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

**The Chair:** Witnesses' expenses.

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

**The Chair:** Staff at an in camera meeting. The motion is that, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person and one other staff person from each party present at an in camera meeting.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** In camera meeting transcripts.

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

**The Chair:** Notice of motions. In the last session, my understanding is that the finance committee adopted that 36 hours' notice be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the committee.

Monsieur Bernier.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC):** I would like to propose an amendment to the motions. I propose that we be allowed a little more time. In other committees, 48 hours' notice is the rule, not 36 hours. Having more time would give everyone a chance to familiarize themselves with the motions and to get them in both official languages. Some motions are quite long. Therefore, for the sake of greater efficiency, I suggest that we be allowed 48 hours, rather than 36 hours.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay.

Monsieur Mulcair.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** I for one have always believed that we should leave well enough alone. We haven't yet had a problem with the 36-hour rule. Things have worked well and there have been no problems with getting the translation. In any event, motions are systematically translated. This committee has already discussed this rule at length in the past. We've never had a problem. So then we should simply maintain the status quo.

• (0930)

[English]

**The Chair:** Merci.

Mr. Wallace, Mr. McCallum, and then Monsieur Laforest.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** It's just a clarification for me. When does the clock start ticking? Is it when the motion is received by the clerk or when we receive it?

**The Clerk:** It's when you receive the motion translated.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** So it's 36 hours from when it's e-mailed to my office?

**The Clerk:** Yes, translated.

**The Chair:** Mr. McCallum.

[Translation]

**Hon. John McCallum:** We've already discussed this and agreed on 36 hours. We have never had any translation problems. Therefore, I see no problem with maintaining the status quo.

[English]

**The Chair:** Monsieur Laforest.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** Mr. Bernier is arguing that 48 hours would be a more efficient way to proceed. But it was precisely because of concerns for efficiency and a desire to speed up the pace of work that the committee opted for the 36-hour rule. I think it's better to maintain the status quo, since we haven't had any problems and the effectiveness of this approach has been proven.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Merci.

Mr. Pacetti.

[Translation]

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The committee would like to sit on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Therefore, if it decided to do something after 11 a.m. on Tuesday, there would be no time to table a motion, since the 48 hours would be up. That's why we opted for 36 hours' notice. This allows us to discuss the motion on Thursday, following the Tuesday meeting. This is a reasonable time frame and it allows us to work more efficiently. Otherwise, we would have to wait a full week before debating a motion tabled on a Tuesday. After all, 36 hours gives us two sleeps.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bernier.

**Hon. Maxime Bernier:** Mr. Chair, after listening to my colleagues, I'd like to withdraw the motion. I'll agree to the 36-hour rule, as provided for in the motion.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. We're all in agreement on 36 hours.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** On the questioning of witnesses, I think in the last session this committee adopted two different types: one when regular witnesses appear and one when a minister appears. We'll deal with when witnesses appear.

Mr. Wallace.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a suggestion on what's here. In my experience on this committee and others, I think we're all here to represent our constituents. We all put in a lot of time in our committee work. I'd like to see everybody have an opportunity to have at least a few minutes of questioning, and I mean everybody.

I, myself, have no issue with the 10-minute aspect of the witness part, but on the first and second rounds, I do have a recommendation that's different from what's printed here. First of all, I think everybody should get five minutes. There shouldn't be a seven-minute round. That way, we'll get more opportunities to ask questions, which is what I think is always the key aspect.

You may want to write this down, but what I would suggest is that in the first round, we would go Liberal, Bloc, NDP, and then Conservative, all at five minutes. I worked this out to make sure that everybody gets covered. In the second round, I would go Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, Conservative, Liberal, and Conservative. Then, if there's more time, we would go NDP, then Conservative. Then it would just repeat itself over again.

In this way, if there are two rounds, everybody gets five minutes. Now, the difference between this and the last Parliament is that we have—and I'll be frank with you—one more Conservative on this side. I think it's only appropriate that everybody has a five-minute round to talk to witnesses.

My experience with this committee in the last Parliament was that it was very professional in its approach. We all asked our questions and there wasn't a lot of partisan politics at the committee level. I'd like to see that continue and I'd like to see everybody have a shot.

That's why I want to reduce it to five minutes and make sure that I have a schedule here that meets everybody's needs in terms of an opportunity to talk to witnesses. That's on the first section, Mr. Chair.

• (0935)

**The Chair:** Can you go through your order again?

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Sure, and I'll go slowly.

In the first round we made a slight change. Obviously it's five minutes and not seven. That's my suggestion. It goes Liberal, Bloc, and we move the NDP up. It's Liberal, Bloc, NDP, and then Conservative. In the second round it goes back and forth: Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative. That's to make sure that all the Liberal members get an opportunity to ask a question. If there's more time, the next speaker will be NDP and then Conservative. Then we start up again, and we go Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, Conservative, and it just continues on in that process.

The reduced time at the beginning allows for more speakers or more questioners, and it makes sure that all parties who sit on this committee have at least five minutes.

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

I have Monsieur Laforest and then Mr. Kramp.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** Mr. Chair, I disagree completely.

We have nonetheless achieved a certain level of efficiency, as demonstrated by the status quo. This motion would lop two minutes off the first round when at times, if not often, we're short on time. I do want everyone to have an opportunity to ask questions and based on our experience last year, we manage to accomplish that goal. Therefore, I don't see how we would be more efficient if we lopped two minutes off the first round, when a member presents his party's position and arguments.

[English]

**The Chair:** Merci.

Mr. Kramp, and then Mr. Mulcair.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I'd like a repeat on the second round just for clarification. I was fine with Mr. Wallace's suggestion, but it is my understanding that he wishes to put the NDP back up, and then after speaker nine on the old ones...could you repeat that again? It gives the NDP an option to be able to come in on the second round. Is that what you're suggesting with that?

**The Chair:** My understanding is that the second round would be Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative. The third round would start with the NDP.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** That's right, if there's a third round.

**The Chair:** That's what I mean.

Mr. Mulcair.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** In light of the redistribution of the seats in Parliament, we could have come up with any number of arguments. There are fewer Liberals and more New Democrats, but the fact of the matter is that the Chair always ensures that there is a second round of questioning. Even if we're last, we know that we will get our turn, as provided for in the rules. Like my Bloc colleague, I too disagree completely with Mr. Wallace's motion. Besides which, I know from experience that seven minutes go by very quickly, particularly when you're trying to press your point with a witness. Anyone who is the least bit adept can eat up a lot of time. We call

them time wasters. If this motion were approved, we would have very little time. Seven minutes are needed to set the scene. I think we can all live with the existing arrangement.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. McCallum.

**Hon. John McCallum:** I agree with my opposition colleagues on this. First of all, frequently it's good for the first speaker from the parties to have the seven minutes. Also, I think in the past the chair has found a way to accommodate everybody who wants to speak, in one way or another. Sometimes it's through sharing time or other mechanisms. I'd like to register my agreement with the Bloc and NDP on this point.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Menzies.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** I'm certainly going to support Mr. Wallace's recommendation. I think you'll find that most times in the last session, in order to make sure everybody had a chance to speak, I most often tried to share my time with my colleagues. I think that's fair. To make sure that happens on all sides, I'd like to see us go to a five-minute round for the first round. To be very blunt, it's fairer to the NDP, to make sure they have an opportunity and usually do have a chance for a second question, whereas this way they're probably left out. I would certainly support this.

• (0940)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Wallace.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Mr. Chair, it doesn't sound as though I'm getting support. The fact is, with the motion as it's presented here, or with the process we had last time, there will be a member of the committee who won't get a chance to speak in the first or second round. That's the way it is unless people take less than their five minutes. I don't think that's fair. I think we're all putting in time here. I can tell you that I have been on other committees before where everybody got a shot to ask a question. We talk about working together, fairness, and all this rhetoric—well here's a chance to put it into action, Mr. Chair. I think it's a mistake if we don't give every opportunity to every member of the committee who's doing the work.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Is there any further discussion? My sense was that there wasn't—

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** I didn't hear what the parliamentary secretary was recommending. Was he recommending five minutes?

**The Chair:** He's recommending five minutes. The suggestion is to move the first round to five minutes each and then to move to the different order proposed by Mr. Wallace.

(Amendment negated)

**The Chair:** May I make a recommendation, as your chair? If witnesses are given up to 10 minutes on their opening statements, then when we have four witnesses, that's 40 minutes gone. In the past, as the chair, I've found that it's better when you have a discussion between members and witnesses. So can I recommend, as the chair, that you allow me five-minute opening statements for each witness? For instance, if we have one witness for an hour, I can have more leeway in allowing more time. But if we have up to four or five witnesses at pre-committee hearings, and they each get 10 minutes, it really shortens the time for members to ask questions. That's just my experience as chair of industry. I'm recommending that here.

We'll go to Mr. Mulcair.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** I'm not sure how you interpret this provision, but when it's stated in the plural, I think one can rightfully argue that it's a maximum of 10 minutes in total. In other words, 10 minutes are allotted for a witness; if there are two witnesses, then it's five minutes per witness; if there are three witnesses, then it's three and a half minutes per witness. I don't have a problem with that arrangement. If you wish to clarify that, by all means go ahead and do so.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay.

Well, if it's worded that the chair, when we have more witnesses before us, for instance, can make it a maximum of five minutes.... Obviously, if we have one witness, for instance, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, we want to hear from him for more than five minutes. But if we have four or five witnesses....

Mr. McCallum.

**Hon. John McCallum:** I have just a small point.

I think the English accommodates you and the French doesn't. Because the English says "given up to 10 minutes", so you can make it five minutes. The French says they'll get 10 minutes.

**The Chair:** My Alberta French is failing me here, so I have to rely on....

Mr. Pacetti.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think as the chair you have to have some discretionary power or ability to determine how much time witnesses should be given. If you're not able to do that, I don't think you're qualified to be chair. I would even leave it up to you, if you want, but I don't think we have to determine that.

The problem is for some witnesses that want to testify for excessively long timeframes. That's what we should try to avoid. You'll have situations when you may want five-minute or seven-minute intervals, and I don't think we can put that in writing. So it's up to you.

**The Chair:** Well, if it allows, and if the committee agrees, that I can do five minutes for more witnesses, then I'm fine with the motion as worded.

Mr. Bernier, did you want to comment?

[Translation]

**Hon. Maxime Bernier:** I agree with this interpretation of the French version whereby witnesses are allotted 10 minutes. One could interpret this as meaning that each witness is allotted 10 minutes. The text could read "jusqu'à 10 minutes". This would reflect more accurately the wording of the English motion. My colleague Mr. McCallum was indeed right.

• (0945)

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay. The clerk will make that change.

[Translation]

The motion will read "jusqu'à 10 minutes".

[English]

All in favour, then, on when a witness appears? Well, we've voted on that.

Now we'll discuss when a minister appears, such as the Minister of Finance or others.

We'll have Mr. McKay.

**Hon. John McKay:** Chair, I'd like to propose that in round three, after the NDP has had seven minutes, that we immediately move to the second round. The rationale for that is that the minister has 15 minutes for the presentation, which is usually the government's agenda, and I've noticed that it frequently exceeds 15 minutes. That effectively means that if you add the Conservative's seven minutes to the government's 15 minutes, they essentially, in the first round, get equal time, not that I've noticed any fluffball questions coming from the Conservative side of the equation.

Essentially, the government gets more time to present its side of the issue in the first round, and by the time the first round is over, the whole thing is over, because the minister generally appears for about an hour. My view of it is that when a minister appears, the weighting should go to the opposition rather than to the government side of the equation. So I'd propose a very simple amendment that we immediately go to the second round after the NDP has had its seven minutes.

**The Chair:** Mr. McKay is proposing that the fourth questioner be eliminated entirely and we just go to the second round.

I have Mr. Mulcair, Mr. Wallace, and Mr. Kramp.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** While I'd like to thank Mr. McKay for his concern, I have to say, with all due respect, that his comments show a profound lack of awareness of the difference between the executive and legislative branches of government.

In this forum, as lawmakers, we are all equal. We must all have an opportunity to put questions to the government, and that applies to those of us who are members of the same political party. In my view, it would be a mistake, in so far as our parliamentary institutions are concerned, not to give MPs, regardless of their political affiliation, equal time during the first round. Even though my party stands to benefit from this proposal, I think it would be wrong for this institution.

[English]

**The Chair:** Merci.

Mr. Wallace, please.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** I agree with Mr. Mulcair 100%.

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

Mr. Kramp.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** There's no repetition necessary. That was my point.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

If there's nothing further on that, we'll vote first on the amendment by Mr. McKay to remove the Conservative member of Parliament from the first round.

(Amendment negatived)

**The Chair:** That's defeated.

Next, "when a minister appears...", unamended, as written?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** That deals with the routine motions.

Mr. McCallum.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Someone mentioned that the minister sometimes exceeds his limit. Is it not usually the case that we have rules? When we have a rule, it should be obeyed. If a minister does come before us, can I ask you as the incoming chair whether you intend to require that the rules be followed?

**The Chair:** My understanding, as this is written, is that any minister will have a maximum of 15 minutes. As the chair, I will have to hold the minister to that.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** That's my understanding.

Mr. Pacetti.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** I think we just ran into a problem before, when we had the 15 minutes. We had a minister come in and speak for 30 minutes in a one-hour appearance. He came 10 minutes late. I think that was a problem.

I would like to propose an additional motion, maybe an informal motion: that due to the importance of the finance committee, it be given priority in being in one of the two main committee rooms, this one or the one across the hall, and that it be televised as much as possible. I can put that in a motion. I'm not sure, but I know we have put this in the past. Could we put that somewhere?

**An hon. member:** Massimo wants to reserve his TV time.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

● (0950)

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** That's right. I get so much TV time, I have to rely on this committee for it.

**The Chair:** Mr. Wallace.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** I just have a question for the clerk. I don't care where we meet. I don't mind the concept of having it televised.

Are there not other committee rooms that have the ability to televise meetings?

**The Clerk:** In the West Block.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** In the West Block, but not in the meeting room across from where we were before, for example?

**The Clerk:** No.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Thank you for that clarification.

**The Chair:** I think all members would concur and I think we can strongly express that to the clerk and to the whips. You can tell all your whips that you want to be here.

Mr. Menzies.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** Mr. Chair, I guess the only concern is that if we do decide we need extra meetings, that's when we run into a real problem. I would certainly support Massimo on this, as it's a lot handier, but it's not our choice. I realize that's up to the room availability.

**The Chair:** Okay. We have a full two-hour slot today and we've gone through the election of the chair and vice-chairs and routine motions.

The clerk has informed me that the supplementary estimates (B) have been referred to this committee. I don't know if there's a time limit on returning those back to the House. Obviously, talk to your leaders and whips with respect to those estimates as to what you would like this committee to do.

We have possible studies recommended by members. We passed the subcommittee motion, so we can have that, but we have a meeting on Thursday as well, and I'm open to hearing suggestions from members as to what we should study.

Mr. McCallum.

**Hon. John McCallum:** I would think that the parliamentary budget officer has done a lot of useful analysis of the budget, and it would be a good idea to hear from him. We've had a little bit of discussion amongst committee members, and I think it might also be a good idea to have the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney, here. One option would be to split the time equally between those two for the meeting on Thursday, assuming they are both available.

**The Chair:** The proposal is to invite the parliamentary budget officer and the Governor of the Bank of Canada to the meeting on Thursday. I think that's a very reasonable motion.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** As the chair, I will do so.

Mr. Wallace.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Mr. Chair, the amendment that was passed by the House of Commons indicated that the government needs to report back on a frequent basis starting at the end of March. I think that means that this committee needs to look at the actual budget bill—the implementation bill—if we're going to actually implement anything by that time.

My suggestion is that we start to see witnesses on the budget bill next week, and maybe we could start that on Tuesday. I'm open to any discussion on that.

**The Chair:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Wallace.

Mr. McCallum.

**Hon. John McCallum:** I certainly think that's a good idea. But since the budget is large, the next thing to ask is what witnesses and what themes?

Since my colleague put it on the table, I would suggest that two themes are important in terms of these quarterly reports—and important overall. One of these would be infrastructure and the degree to which money is going to get out the door, and the degree to which we can measure whether money is getting out the door on a regular basis. The second priority item I'd put on the table would be the changes that have been made in employment insurance and whether further changes might need to be made.

So I would propose two themes as early priorities: infrastructure and employment insurance. There could be a variety of witnesses on each.

• (0955)

**The Chair:** Okay. So the recommendation is to begin discussions of the budget and an expected budget implementation bill next week, and Mr. McCallum is recommending infrastructure and employment insurance as the two initial themes.

I have Monsieur Laforest, and then Mr. Wallace.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Wallace was saying earlier that he assumed the budget would pass this evening. We're in the process of setting an agenda based on that likelihood. Perhaps we should wait until it's a fait accompli. I'm also assuming that the budget will be approved.

You stated earlier that you were also awaiting recommendations or suggestions from committee members concerning the committee's possible agenda. There are a number of interesting possibilities, but I don't think we need to rush into anything. Let's meet with the parliamentary budget officer next Thursday, and with the Director of the Bank of Canada. However, next Tuesday, I think we should take a closer look at what we should put on our agenda for the coming weeks, before we immediately turn our attention to the budget. We need to wait and see if there are any other issues that might tie in with the budget.

I think we're moving a little too quickly. Let's set aside next Tuesday's meeting to consider the future business of the committee. Besides, according to our agenda, we weren't supposed to decide this today.

[English]

**The Chair:** That's correct. It's a recommendation, obviously. The committee can choose to decide that at a later date.

Mr. Wallace.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** I appreciate the input from my colleagues across the table. I don't disagree with the concepts of areas of study that the Liberal member has put forward, nor do I disagree with the

Bloc presentation. But we don't know if the budget will pass tonight. If it doesn't pass tonight, Monsieur Laforest, I think we'll be knocking on doors next week, right?

In terms of a compromise, instead of putting it into the motion exactly what we're doing today, my suggestion is that we maybe add a half an hour to the meeting on Thursday and have an actual discussion of what the themes will be and what we're going to do with the budget timing.

My suggestion is that we either take a half an hour away from the speakers—which I don't want to do—or add a half an hour to this committee meeting to make that happen on Thursday.

**The Chair:** The proposal then is to add half an hour, from 11 to 11:30, on Thursday morning.

Mr. Mulcair.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** I tend to agree with Mr. Wallace. Earlier, we defended our institutions and I think the committee is making a fundamental error in assuming that it knows how the majority of parliamentarians are going to vote. One never knows. The Liberals might find the courage to propose some genuine amendments. They have the gall to claim that they are putting the government on probation, when in fact, all they have done is given it their seal of approval. The brave Liberals, who have ordered the government to produce four reports, may demand some changes to employment insurance. We'll have to wait and see, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Pacetti, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's quite simple: if the budget is defeated, then we won't be here tomorrow. I think we've already wasted enough time. We came here to work. We can wait until Thursday to have a five to ten-minute discussion about next week's agenda. I think everyone knows that the budget is going to pass. If it doesn't, we won't be here tomorrow. If it does pass, then we should talk about when it goes before the House, that is when the bill is adopted. Perhaps we should start sooner rather than later, otherwise it will be hard getting witnesses next week. We could start with a simple discussion and submit names of witnesses we would like to hear from. That way, we'll be ready to finalize the list on Thursday. Otherwise, from a work standpoint, next week will be lost.

• (1000)

[English]

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

Mr. Menzies.

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** I agree completely. We owe it to Canadians to get on with this. We have a deadline for reporting. It'll be rather embarrassing for all of us if we can't report back that something has actually happened.

To Mr. McCallum's comment, we need to make sure we hear from witnesses. I'd be interested in hearing Mr. McCallum's suggestions on who we should hear first. If this money isn't getting out the door, who's standing in the way of it? We need to get this started right away. We owe it to Canadians to get this moving. Whether the budget passes tonight or not is irrelevant. At this point let's plan on getting this done. So I encourage us to get an idea of who we want to hear and get moving.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I think members of the committee agree on Mr. Wallace's suggestion that we add an extra half hour to Thursday's meeting. If members wish, they should send suggestions to me and the clerk. If not, bring them on Thursday morning but be prepared to discuss them. We will invite the Governor of the Bank of Canada and the parliamentary budgetary officer for Thursday morning.

I have nothing further, so unless any member wants to propose something, we'll see you Thursday morning.

Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

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**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**

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