



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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CANADA

# **Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri- Food**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, June 21, 2011**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. Larry Miller**



## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Tuesday, June 21, 2011

• (1530)

[English]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. David-Andrés Novoa):** Good afternoon.

Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types motions, entertain points of order, or participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

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

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Go ahead, Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** I would like to nominate Mr. Larry Miller for the position of chair. He's a great member and he has done a great job in the previous years. I think this committee could really utilize his history and knowledge, so that's who I would nominate.

**The Clerk:** All right. Are there any further motions?

It has been moved by Mr. Hoback that Mr. Miller be elected chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried. Mr. Miller is duly elected as chair of the committee.

Before inviting Mr. Miller to take the chair, if the committee wishes, we will now proceed to the election of the vice-chairs.

[Translation]

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

I am now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair of the committee.

[English]

Go ahead, Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** I'll propose my good friend Mr. Allen.

Is that okay with you, Mr. Allen?

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Excellent, although I'm not sure about the preamble.

[Translation]

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Mr. Lemieux that Mr. Allen be elected first vice-chair of the committee.

[English]

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried and Mr. Allen duly elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

I'm now prepared to receive a motion for the second vice-chair.

Go ahead, Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** We have a member from the Liberal Party, Mr. Valeriotte, who was part of the committee last time, and I think he'd make an excellent vice-chair.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Mr. Hoback that Mr. Valeriotte be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried and Mr. Valeriotte duly elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

I now invite Mr. Miller to take the chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC)):** Thank you very much, and thanks very much, Mr. Hoback, for nominating me, and the rest of you for supporting that nomination. I'm sure we're going to have a very productive session.

To the returning members, congratulations. To our new members Mr. Rousseau, Madame Raynault, Mr. Zimmer, Mr. Payne, and Mr. Lobb, welcome to the committee.

As well, congratulations to our vice-chair and second vice-chair, and Mr. Bellavance sat in to hear us.

Our next potential business here is routine motions, and I need unanimous consent to deal with them today.

Do I have unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** A lot of this, as you know, is regular housekeeping to establish the guidelines the committee operates under. Although there are generalities from committee to committee, every committee is in control of its destiny as to how you want to carry it out.

I'll just remind the committee that I need a mover for each motion.

Does everyone have a copy of the motions?

**A voice:** Yes.

**The Chair:** The first one is for analysts.

For anybody not familiar with committees, we have a couple of analysts—always one, anyway—who sits in. This motion would make it possible for them to sit in.

Do I have a mover for that?

It is moved by Mr. Payne:

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

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** I'd invite the analysts to join us now.

• (1535)

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Could we have the analysts introduce themselves so the new members can—

**The Chair:** Certainly. I was just going to get to that.

Could both of you introduce yourselves?

**Mr. Frédéric Forge (Committee Researcher):** My name is Frédéric Forge, and my colleague is Khamla Heminthavong.

We are analysts with the Library of Parliament. We both have a background in agriculture. We're here to provide research and information to the members on the topics the committee wants to study.

**Ms. Khamla Heminthavong (Committee Researcher):** My name is Khamla. I'm an analyst.

**The Chair:** Welcome aboard.

The second motion is for a subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

Do I have a mover for that motion?

It is moved by Madame Raynault.

Is there discussion on that motion?

Go ahead, Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** I'd like to raise a point on this one.

For the subcommittee, I've been a long-term proponent, Chair, that you should be there in a neutral capacity. You should be acting as chair both on committee and on subcommittee.

Here we have only four people involved on the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. I think we should add one. We should have five. We should have two government members, two vice-chairs, and a parliamentary secretary—I'm sorry, I've got that wrong: it should be two government members, one of which is the parliamentary secretary, and the two vice-chairs. That allows you to act in the capacity of chair without having to take sides.

**The Chair:** What you are doing is amending this motion so that all three parties are represented, plus the chair, plus the parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Right.

**The Chair:** Is there discussion on the amendment?

Go ahead, Mr. Valeriote.

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** If you are the chair at a subcommittee, would that entitle you to vote to break any tie when an opinion is being expressed?

In your absence, then, if this motion you're bringing forward doesn't succeed, what would occur if a tie could not be broken, if he wasn't there?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** What I'm saying is that we've long had the problem of not being well represented on the subcommittee. In past Parliaments, I've put forward many times the fact that the parliamentary secretary should be on the committee. It was just never approved. What I'm suggesting here is that as the parliamentary secretary, I would be part of the steering committee and have a colleague with me.

• (1540)

**Mr. Frank Valeriote:** Mr. Chair, I don't recall a time when business that was discussed at this committee wasn't suggested by the subcommittee.

I'm sure you'll correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Lemieux, but I don't recall a time that any business that anyone wished to have discussed wasn't discussed, unless it failed by reason of somebody bringing a motion for a study. Typically, as I understand it, any work of the subcommittee or the steering committee was done in the genuine interests of Canadians and the genuine interests of farmers. There was no level of intolerance at the subcommittee or the steering committee, so I'm uncertain as to why you would want an extra member, Mr. Lemieux.

I'm not trying to be difficult. I'm just trying to understand why there is a need for a change.

**The Chair:** I'm going to stick to the list of speakers. Mr. Atamanenko is next. Then I have Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Thank you.

First of all, congratulations, Larry, on assuming the chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Alex.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** I thought our steering committee functioned quite well last time with the setup we had. I know, Pierre, that you weren't happy with it, but now you have two members on the committee and there are two from the opposition.

We usually get agreement. I didn't see any conflict in the subcommittee. We usually seemed to come up with the appropriate agenda, which we took to the committee, so I don't see why we should change the model or do anything other than what's proposed here in item two.

**The Chair:** Mr. Hoback is next.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Thank you, Chair.

I was on the finance committee, and we did this exact same thing. It does a couple of things. It reflects the actual number of seats in the House of Commons. It actually reflects what that situation is now.

I'd like to remind the members that even though the steering committee might get together and set an agenda or a course of action, it still would have to be approved by all the members of the committee.

I'd also like to remind you that the chair would be sitting there, neutral, and the only time his voice would be raised would actually be in the case of a tie vote. In the steering committee, I don't think that is as big an issue as it would be in this committee as a whole.

Again, it just gets back to reflecting the relevance of what the Canadian population sent us here with a strong mandate to do. I think the steering committee should be represented that way too.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I believe the job of the steering committee or the subcommittee is to review and set our agenda so we don't use up valuable committee time doing that. Right now, as you would have it, you would have two and two necessarily, and I don't know of any committees that do not have an odd number of people so that they at least have the ability to break a tie.

You've brought up the possibility that with only four members on the steering committee, you could have a tie. If there is ever a disagreement—I'm not saying there will be—I don't know why this committee would always have to adjudicate it. I think it should just happen within the subcommittee.

As Mr. Hoback says, this is the representation of the House of Commons, of what the people have sent back, and I think this is actually very reasonable.

**The Chair:** The way it's done is that the recommendation that comes out of the steering committee comes back here for approval. As chair, it would probably make my job a lot easier—and I think the committee more productive—if it didn't turn into a big argument once we got back here, but I just want to point out that whatever we recommend at the subcommittee has to be approved here officially before we carry on.

Mr. Valeriote, you're going to be the last speaker.

Oh, Mr. Allen has his hand up.

**Mr. Frank Valeriote:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

It is generally agreed that the subcommittee and steering committee worked well in the past. It's also clear that the Conservatives outnumber the opposition.

Because the former model did work, perhaps a suggestion would be that we continue with the former model, with the caveat that if there is any discomfort, malfeasance, or anything else at the subcommittee, the issue can be brought back and the model can be changed at that time. For now we would continue with the model that we had, perhaps as a demonstration of the good faith among all the members of this committee that we come into this session to work as we worked in the last session, with cooperation in mind.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Mr. Allen is the last speaker.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Chair, I understand the parliamentary secretary's efforts to make sure he is there. Clearly, it outlined that it was there. In the last Parliament there were four, three from the opposition and one from the government, and it was based on the composition of that particular Parliament.

I heard Mr. Hoback say that the numbers are such, but clearly the steering committee is only an advisory body that says what it thinks the agenda should be. If the agenda is not satisfactory to the committee, on which the government side owns the majority of the votes, they will say no. I would expect that. I wouldn't expect them to agree to something they didn't want to do.

As Mr. Valeriote said, as we go forward, or at least as we start, let's see if we can work out an agenda for the first session in the fall that talks about the things we all agree we want to do. If there is that sense of cooperation, it bodes well for the committee going into the future.

I agree that the parliamentary secretary should sit on the steering committee. That should be his role. The chair should be there as well as an active participant, rather than an impartial chair as proposed by Mr. Lemieux.

My preference would be to leave it at four and to continue on, hopefully with a sense that we intend to go forward working on things on which all of us are in agreement.

I think we can do that. Certainly on our side that's our intention. I can't speak for anyone other than us, but the intention we have is to go forward in that way.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemieux, you're that last speaker.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Chair, I have been listening to the discussion. In the past Parliament, Chair, I thought you were always in a very awkward position, being chair of the steering committee while being the government representative as well.

Here in the committee you're expected to be neutral. You're expected to listen to all sides of the debate. You're expected to make neutral rulings. The scenario was very different when it came to the steering committee. You were expected to represent the government side. You were expected to vote in favour of the government side and chair the meeting at the same time. I always found that to be a conflict.

My proposal at the time was not that the parliamentary secretary be on the steering committee, but that a government member be on the steering committee. My point was that we were clearly outvoted on the steering committee.

In the past, if a government member had been present on the steering committee, that would have freed you up to act in a neutral capacity, to be the chair of both the steering committee and of the main committee. There would have been no conflict at all. Clearly we would have been outvoted 3:1 on the steering committee. It was rejected every single time.

We have an opportunity now, Chair, to make you independent, so that as chair you can preside over both our agriculture meetings and the steering committee. We should take this opportunity to do so. That better represents the makeup of the House today, and that is the aim of committee. That's why the committee member numbers are the way they are today. The numbers reflect the makeup of the House. The steering committee should do the same thing.

Also, if there is a tie, the chair must break the tie. That is the way it works here, and it's the way it should work in steering committee as well. I don't think it's good policy to have four people sitting in a committee on which the chair is expected to also act on the government side, to vote on the government side. Then what would we have? We would have a tie that nobody could break. That doesn't make any sense to me.

I understand what my colleagues are saying, but that's my line of reasoning. It is a reasonable approach. I imagine we're going to end up voting on it, although my colleague wants to raise a point as well.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** If it's a point, go ahead, and then I'm going to call the vote on the amendment.

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

Actually, it's not a point of debate. I'd just like to add a friendly amendment, if it's the will of the committee. I haven't heard you read my colleague's amendment, but I think it would best be phrased as, "That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of the chair, the two vice-chairs, and two government members".

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Actually, to be friendly to your friendly amendment, there is a disadvantage to being specific by saying "vice-chairs" and "parliamentary secretary". If Malcolm, as a vice-chair, is away and can't be there because he has a duty somewhere else, no one can replace him on the steering committee. It might be better to say "an NDP member" and it might be better to say "a Liberal member". That allows for flexibility. If the vice-chair is available, the vice-chair is there. If the vice-chair is not available, one of your colleagues can replace you, and the same for Francis, and actually the same for me.

I think it's better not to say "two vice-chairs", but "a member of the NDP, a member of the Liberals, and two government members".

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemieux, if it's okay with you, I think we could word it that the committee would consist of a member from each sitting party—the Liberals, the NDP, and the Conservatives—plus the parliamentary secretary and the chair.

Would that satisfy—

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** The problem is that if I'm away on other duties because I'm expected to replace the minister in debate or at an announcement, then I should have the freedom to say that Mr.

Hoback can replace me at a meeting. I'd brief him, and he could replace me at the meeting. I think by going to simply the number of MPs—one from the NDP, one from the Liberals, and two from the government—and making it a little more generic, we're actually offering ourselves a bit more flexibility.

**The Chair:** Okay, that's your amendment. I think everybody is clear on it.

(Amendment agreed to)

Just to make sure there's no lack of clarity, the motion as amended will read, "That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and composed of the Chair, one member of the NDP, one member of the Liberal Party, and two members of the Conservative Party".

(Motion as amended agreed to)

We'll move on to the third item, which deals with reduced quorum. Do I have a mover? It's moved by Mr. Zimmer.

Is there discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The fourth routine motion is on distribution of documents. It is moved by Mr. Valeriote.

Is there discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The fifth motion is on working meals. It is moved by Mr. Payne.

Is there discussion? I just want to make it clear that because our meetings are from 3:30 to 5:30, there won't be any meals. I'm happy with water, but I believe we'll probably have coffee and juice. That's just so everybody's clear.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Next is the motion on travel accommodation and living expenses of witnesses, moved by Mr. Hoback.

Is there discussion?

Go ahead, Mr. Valeriote.

**Mr. Frank Valeriote:** I think there should be a caveat that when we're traveling to the riding of a member of this committee, the member has an obligation to entertain the entire committee in his or her home.

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

**The Chair:** You know, I think I could support that amendment.

**Mr. Frank Valeriote:** Yes, absolutely.

**The Chair:** One thing I want to bring up is something that's bothered me at times. I think that sometimes groups are represented here at committee by more people than are necessary. I suggest we limit the number of witnesses that we pay for from any one organization if they come here. I throw out that suggestion to you.

I don't know if it's an issue with anybody else, but I think that in a time of restraint... It's not that I want in any way to limit an organization from bringing its points before the committee, but I believe that from time to time it is abused.

• (1555)

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Chair, what they did in the finance committee was leave the second witness up to the discretion of the chair. It would be one witness from each organization; then, based on the discretion of the chair, they could add a second witness. If they could make a justified argument for bringing two people, that option would still sit there.

**The Chair:** One place where I thought it was maybe abused.... A lot of these organizations—maybe not all of them, but most of them—have representatives in Ottawa. They are based in Ottawa. I'm just wondering if basically all these groups could be made aware that should they have somebody in Ottawa, we would expect one of those witnesses to attend. If they can show us that they need somebody else here for a reason, I'm open to that.

Go ahead, Alex.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** We may have a situation in which there is one organization, but let's say there are two farmers, and they come from different parts of the country. I wouldn't want to limit that. I think it may be a good idea to look at it and have some guidelines, but not have rules like that.

**The Chair:** What I'm suggesting would in no way affect individuals like that, Alex. That's not what I'm trying to accomplish.

Go ahead, Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** I don't think the committee should be involved in deciding where witnesses come from or saying that they should be coming from your Ottawa office or your Alberta office or your P.E.I. office. That's for the witnesses to decide.

I do understand that maybe we should limit it to one person, and if they have a strong case for two, such as Alex's case, and they have representation from across the country and they see value, they just have to talk to you, Chair, and convince you of that.

Normally only one person talks. They only have 10 minutes for an organization, and normally we have multiple organizations at the table. It's rare that two people from one organization split their time evenly. One person is usually there in support.

Maybe it's not a bad idea to say that we should only fund one person, unless there's a good case for two, in which case we're open to that. That would mean making an amendment here to go to one representative.

Before a motion is moved, I'd like to hear a bit more debate on it to see what people think about it.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** I'd like to see the default position as one visitor or guest, with the exception being additional people if the chair sees it necessary. The default would be one rather than two.

**Mr. Frank Valeriote:** I'm getting a little concerned, because a lot of these procedures were in place before. We worked reasonably effectively with them before. I know that on a number of occasions—for instance, when we had the biotech study—Mr.

Hoback and I would disclose the kinds of witnesses we were bringing up and have conversations about the reasons.

There are some issues for which two representatives may necessarily be required, and I'd hate to think that they have to state their case to you. With all due respect, I trust your judgment, but I hate to see the rules of this committee become so strict that all of a sudden somebody has to state their case to you to convince you that they should be allowed to be a witness.

I think we should continue to accommodate each other with the normal respect we've given in the past. We would present the list of witnesses, and the clerk and everyone will look them over. If it appears that there's going to be a problem or that it's too onerous a task to get them all heard or that kind of thing, then people will accommodate each other.

I think we're making rules now that imply that we will not accommodate each other. They will foreclose the opportunity we otherwise might have to have a good discussion about who should and shouldn't be witnesses. We're creating all these rules, when until now it was a convention that we just followed.

I would urge us not to make the suggested amendment to this motion.

• (1600)

**The Chair:** First of all—I was going to say this before Mr. Zimmer was done, but I thought I'd let you speak—I would not want the responsibility of making that decision. If it was going to be cut to one witness, I think I should be able to consult with everybody else on the steering committee for a consensus.

I didn't bring it up necessarily to say that we should cut it to one, although I think we could work in those boundaries. I've seen more than once that we've paid to have two members of an organization come here, and their representative in Ottawa comes and sits right behind them. That's not in every case, but it has been abused. I just brought it up for discussion.

**Mr. Frank Valeriote:** I agree that we should be cognizant of it and discourage people from doing it, but I think it is a bit of a mistake to start setting rules to deal with it at the opening of this session.

**The Chair:** Okay. Is there any further discussion on the issue?

Without an amendment, I'm going to call a vote on the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** We're going to move on to staff at in camera meetings.

I need a mover.

**Mr. Frank Valeriote:** I'll move that.

Has that been the normal course of things?

**The Chair:** Yes.

There was an issue that came up with me personally, although I don't think it needs to be in the motion. I had an intern, and a member of the committee questioned who the person was. The intern was allowed to stay with the consent of the committee. That kind of thing happens from time to time when we have interns participating in programs. Some are international and some are party-related. I think it's important for them to be able to sit in, if possible.

I don't think it's ever really been a problem, but under this wording, technically they're not allowed to sit in without the approval of everybody.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Routine motion number 8 deals with transcripts of in camera meetings. It is moved by Mr. Hoback.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Number 9 deals with notices of motion. It is moved by Mr. Lemieux.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Number 10 is with regard to times for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses. It is moved by Mr. Lemieux.

Is there discussion on the motion?

Go ahead, Mr. Lemieux.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** There is some discussion, Chair. I have noticed at previous meetings that often we run out of time. It might have been the number of witnesses present at the table, so it added up to a lot of 10-minute presentations. Sometimes they go over, and you're kind enough not to cut them off, or sometimes a member goes over the allotted time during questioning.

Every member of the committee wants to participate in that committee meeting, but I remember many a time that it didn't transpire that way, because time ran out and one or two committee members never got to ask questions.

I'd like to move an amendment, as follows: "That during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated five minutes for the first round of questioning, and that thereafter five minutes shall be allocated to each questioner in the second and subsequent rounds of questioning at the discretion of the chair".

Basically, it's five minutes across the board. It's not seven minutes in the first round and five minutes elsewhere; it's five minutes for the first round and five minutes for all other rounds.

I think that would help to ensure that all members at the table will have the opportunity to participate in the discussion and the debate. It is difficult to be at a meeting for two hours. You might have a particular question that's pertinent to you, pertinent to the industry, pertinent to your riding, and you don't get to ask it because we're out of time.

Chair, my other experience has been that splitting five minutes is nearly impossible. People take two minutes to ask their question and then two minutes to answer it, and there goes four out of the five minutes. There's no way you can split—not effectively, not properly.

You can't split a five-minute slot, and even seven minutes is very hard.

I think it's just fair. Every MP and every party would have the same. It would be five minutes around the table.

● (1605)

**The Chair:** So your amendment says that every member will—

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** It's changing seven to five.

**The Chair:** You're saying there will be no seven-minute rounds.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Actually, it says that during the questioning of witnesses there be allocated five minutes—so change the "seven minutes" to "five minutes"—for the first round of questioning, and the rest stays the same.

**The Chair:** There would be 10 minutes for opening statements. Does that stay?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Yes. Witnesses have 10 minutes. There's no change there.

It's just for the first round. My amendment is to change it to five minutes from seven minutes.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I have Mr. Valeriote first and then Mr. Hoback.

**Mr. Frank Valeriote:** While Mr. Lemieux may be correct in saying that every MP would have the same amount of time, certainly not every party would have the same amount of time. This would mean that the Conservatives would have 30 minutes, the NDP would have 20 minutes, and the Liberals would have only five minutes.

I consider myself a strong contributing member of the committee. I always have. I think I've always been fair in my approach to the questioning. I've not tried to use a witness to—how should I say it?—serve partisan reasons. I know that used to happen sometimes in this committee, but I've tried not to do that and I think I've succeeded.

I come from a university town. We have the University of Guelph, the agricultural college. I inform myself of issues through access to the people at that university so that I can help this committee in my questioning, as opposed to hindering it.

Only because I know that I'll likely be given only one opportunity at committee to question, I would prefer that it be kept at seven minutes as in the past. The convention was a first round of seven minutes. The Conservatives will have seven minutes as well, and so will the NDP.

I would just ask the chair to make sure that people honour the time constraints, both with their presentations and their questioning.

**The Chair:** Members from all sides have been quite guilty of going over the time—

**Mr. Frank Valeriote:** Yes.

**The Chair:**—but I've been fair right across the board. The clerk keeps the exact time, right to the second, of how long each person speaks, so I can back that up.

I mean, I can be as strict as you want. I can go as far as having the mikes shut off at whatever the time limit is, but I don't think that's fair. If there's a good line of questioning—not rhetoric—I try to be fair on that and, again, equal, irrespective of the amount of time.

Mr. Hoback is next.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Chair, I look at it as the five minutes each time giving everybody the same chance to access the witness. This has nothing to do with Mr. Valeriote. It's just the way the parties are working it out. Mr. Valeriote might be here this week and Mr. Easter might be here next week. There's not a personality aspect in this case.

It's just reality that the parties would line up in a fashion such that each party would have five minutes for each member who asks a question. I think it will make sure that we get all the questions asked. Everybody will have a chance to have the same time with the witnesses who come forward. It's a reasonable proposal. I think this is where we should go.

•(1610)

**The Chair:** Next is Mr. Payne, followed by Mr. Allen.

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** I agree with this interpretation of the five minutes. I believe it's a much better process. I've been on the aboriginal affairs committee, and many times there was not an opportunity for me or some of my colleagues to get a question in. If the time were changed to five minutes, it would give everybody a much better opportunity to ask the questions that they really want answered by the witnesses.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** I understand my colleague's egalitarian approach to life, whereby we are all equal except when we vote, and we will usually lose most of the votes. I suppose egalitarianism went out the window on that one.

To be honest with you, when we were here in the last Parliament, the first round was seven minutes times four. It's now times three, so we actually pick up time and go to the second round seven minutes sooner than we did in the previous Parliament. You are actually picking up time by not having a fourth party, which was us at that time.

The initial round of questioning in most committees—to my knowledge, and I stand to be corrected by those who are on other committees—still usually stands at a couple minutes longer than the second round. That's why we have a first round and a second round and differentiate between them. The sense is that it not only allows the individual MP's questions but also questions around policy that the MP wants to extract in that round. As Mr. Valeriote said, quite often you're representing the party as a whole as the lead questioner, and not necessarily just yourself as an individual. Then we go back and forth.

It seems the issue will be one, two, three, and right to the second round immediately. My guess, based on the fact that we no longer have that fourth person in the first round, is that more than likely Mr. Zimmer—no offence; I am simply using you because you are at that end of the table—would be the last questioner. I'm not suggesting he would be—it's for his side to determine the order of questions—but if I simply go down the line and say Mr. Hoback, one, two, three, all the way down, I believe we'll get to Mr. Zimmer, based on the fact

that we no longer have four parties and only have three. That really was where we made up the additional time.

I understand the concern that all members want an opportunity, and it's fair to want to have the opportunity. I understand what Mr. Payne is saying. I too have been on a committee at which, by the time they got to me, the lights were flashing and it was time to go. That is frustrating, without a doubt, but based on what we have now, I think we'll all get the opportunity to ask a question.

I would prefer to see it stay the same. It seems to me to be the appropriate way to do things, and committees are doing that. That's why we have first and second rounds. The additional couple of minutes differentiate them.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Atamanenko.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** It seems to me that when I first started on this committee and sat in that position, a second round was allotted to me when I was one person. Then I think we changed that arrangement around 2000, so I only got the one round. I found that when you're the sole representative of a party, it's not just one MP and another MP. You have nobody else to consult with. You have some issues that your party wants to bring forward.

I think we owe it to Frank and his party to give them the chance to have seven minutes. Their ideas may be different from ours here, and limiting it to five minutes would obviously take away some time for their ideas. In respect to Frank and his party, in this case I would strongly suggest that we leave it as is. It has worked. As Malcolm said, we can go to the second round earlier.

I suggest we leave it as is.

•(1615)

**The Chair:** Mr. Atamanenko, when you pointed out that you sometimes got a second chance, I remember I was probably the guy at the time—because I was sitting over there—who was quite dismayed when I saw that. It was nothing against you; it was the fact that quite often you had a chance to speak twice. When I sat on the international trade committee on which Mr. Julian also sat, almost always Mr. Julian would speak three times, because of the way they had their process set up, before at least two members of our side spoke. I thought that wasn't right.

I'm not arguing or debating the time. It's up to you people to do that. From that aspect, that's the reason I think every member of the committee should get a chance to speak before anybody else gets a second chance, unless somebody passes their spot to that individual. That's a different scenario.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** We changed it last time to make sure that didn't happen. Most times most people did have a chance to speak. Now that we're going into it sooner, everybody should probably have a chance to speak.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Imagine my devastation on discovering the NDP doesn't believe in egalitarian principles any longer.

I firmly believe, and I argued this in the last Parliament as well, that the committee is not here to be the master of political parties, but to be the master of members of Parliament. That is why we are all members of standing committees and associate members of all the other standing committees. It's so that we have the ability to sit in on any committee that we want to. That is what a member of Parliament has.

The rights and privileges of a committee member should be that we are all treated the same. I believe we should all get five minutes and we should all get an opportunity to speak once before anybody else has been given an opportunity to speak for a second time.

It has nothing to do with political parties. It has everything to do with members of Parliament and the rights and responsibilities they should have. I believe firmly in that. I believe everybody should get five minutes. I believe the amendment that is proposed is fair and represents the principles we should go with. I know the finance committee went that way. I know the veterans affair committee has gone that way. Several committees are going that way. I think it's the right way to do things.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I'm going to call the vote on the amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** Now we vote on the main motion, as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

**The Chair:** Now comes routine motion number 11, which deals with the speaking order. It is moved by Mr. Valeriote.

**Mr. Frank Valeriote:** Am I reading Conservative, NDP, Liberal, in the first round? Is that what that means? Is it five minutes?

**The Chair:** Yes. The second round.... Everybody has a copy of this.

**Mr. Frank Valeriote:** Would the order just repeat itself if there was time to start again?

**The Chair:** Yes.

Go ahead, Mr. Storseth.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Being a bit of a parliamentary geek for most of my life, I have seen committees under the majority Liberal government, under minority governments, obviously, and under our majority, and I've never seen the government side ask a question first. It's always been the official opposition that has asked a question first, whether it was a majority government or not. I believe that should be the right of the opposition, but I leave that to the will of the committee.

I would make an amendment that we switch the Conservatives and the NDP in the first round so that it goes NDP, Conservative, Liberal.

**The Chair:** Okay, and everything else would stay the same as written here.

Is everybody clear on Mr. Storseth's amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** Now we vote on the motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

**The Chair:** Since there's nothing else, the meeting stands adjourned.

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