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● (1540)

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mrs. Julie Geoffrion): 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 of motions, cannot entertain points of order, nor 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.

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): I'd like to nominate Bryan May.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Ruimy, that Mr. Bryan May be elected as chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

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

The Chair (Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.)): *Bonjour tout le monde*. Unfortunately, that is probably the extent of my French for now. I do apologize for those that require the translation, but I am working on that quite diligently and hope to be able to speak in both official languages by the end of my term here.

Thank you very much.

This is a great honour and I look forward to working with all of you. We have a lot that will be coming to this committee and a lot of work to do, so I'm not going to waste a lot of time with jibber-jabber. Let's get at it.

If the committee is in agreement, I invite the clerk to proceed with the election of the vice-chairs.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): I nominate Mr. Bob Zimmer, champion of the north, as vice-chair from the Conservative Party.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Warawa that Mr. Zimmer be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

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

[*Translation*]

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

I am now prepared to receive motions for the second vice-chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Ruimy: I nominate Niki Ashton.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Ruimy that Ms. Ashton be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Ms. Ashton duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: I think we're just going to move toward the adoption of the routine motions. Does everyone have a copy of the motions?

Mr. Mark Warawa: No.

The Chair: We have copies here if you need copies.

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Chair, I appreciate these being handed out.

I have no problem with the routine motions that have been adopted previously. I would move that we adopt the routine proceedings with an amendment, and it's to the speaking order. I'd suggest what has been adopted by the committee on procedure and House affairs, which, having been here a very long time, is what I am used to. It works well.

In the first round it's seven minutes, and the second is five minutes. Also I think, particularly in the first round, that five or six minutes goes very fast and that with seven we get a little bit more fulsome input in the questioning in the first round. So I am moving that we adopt the routine proceedings with that change, that there be seven minutes in the first round and five minutes in the second round.

The Chair: Just for clarification, are you talking about the timing only, or the order as well?

Mr. Mark Warawa: This is the rotation time.

The Chair: Okay, so there's a—

Mr. Mark Warawa: The time, traditionally, for the witnesses is 10 minutes per testimony. But in the rotation, in questioning the witnesses, it would be what was adopted by the procedure and House affairs committee, which I think we have—

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): It's a different order, though, to be clear.

The Chair: Yes, I understand that.

So, I guess the question is....

You're a moving to adopt all the motions all at once, as well as—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: With an amendment.

The Chair: With a singular amendment.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Using the model from the procedure and House affairs committee, the change in that first round would be that instead of starting with a Conservative, it would start with the government: Liberal, Conservative, NDP, and Liberal in the first round.

● (1545)

The Chair: Does everybody have both options in front of them?

We'll do them individually, but we will move this one to the front of the order, if you wish, and we can put that to a vote.

We need somebody to move it. For the sake of a proper motion, if you wish to read the whole motion for the record, then we can put it to a vote.

Mr. Mark Warawa: The motion is that we adopt the routine motions, as presented, with the rotation. Is it okay to include this with the rotation being that, or do you want the adoption of this and then to amend it later? I think it's appropriate to make it a motion with that amendment. Is that not correct?

The Chair: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Mark Warawa: I think what's confusing some members is my language, saying I'm making an amendment, because normally an amendment would be in a separate motion.

I'll be moving this with the rotation being seven minutes in the first round and the order of speakers being what was adopted by the procedure and House affairs committee, which is the guiding committee, starting with the government, then the Conservative official opposition, then the NDP, and then back to the Liberals. So it would be seven minutes in the first round and five minutes in the second round. That's my motion.

● (1550)

The Chair: I just think maybe for the sake of being easy, when we get to it, we'll do it that way.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I was trying to be efficient, but obviously it's not working.

The Chair: That's fine.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: I'll go with the first one, analyst services:

> 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: That's great. I'd like to invite the analysts to join us at the table.

You're not an analyst, Terry. I was looking past you.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): I'm new here.

The Chair: We've called him many things but never an analyst. Is that what you're about to say?

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Next is the motion on the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure:

> That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be composed of five (5) members, including the Chair, the two (2) Vice-chairs, and the two (2) members of the Government;
>
> That, the quorum of the Subcommittee shall consist of at least three (3) members including one (1) member of the opposition;
>
> That, each member of the Subcommittee shall be permitted to have one (1) assistant attend any meetings of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure;
>
> That, each party shall be permitted to have one (1) staff member from their House offices attend any meetings.

The Chair: All in favour?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Before we call the question, I'm just looking at the second point: "That, the quorum of the Subcommittee shall consist of at least three (3) members, including one (1) member of the opposition".

To be fair to the NDP, which only has one member, should the NDP be involved with the subcommittee? I'd suggest that I think it would be good practice.

The Chair: If I'm not mistaken, I believe they are. She would be the vice-chair.

This is with regard to quorum.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I understand.

So you wouldn't have quorum with the subcommittee if you—

The Chair: —if one person couldn't make it. That's the main concern.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'm sorry. I missed that. So, that's correct. That deals with both vice-chairs.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Chair, is it necessary to read the entire thing?

● (1555)

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: The motion on meeting without a quorum reads as follows:

> 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 four (4) members are present, including one member from each recognized party; and

> That, in the case of previously scheduled meetings taking place outside the Parliamentary precinct, the Committee members in attendance shall only be required to wait fifteen (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.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: MP Long.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'd just like to say to all the committee members that I'm really looking forward to working with everybody this year and getting a lot of good work done.

My motion is on time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses. It reads:

> That the witnesses from any one organization shall be allowed five (5) to ten (10) minutes, at the discretion of the Chair, to make their opening statements.

During the questioning of witnesses, there shall be allocated time in the following order and amount for the first round of questioning: six minutes for the Conservative Party, six minutes for the Liberal Party, six minutes for the New Democratic Party, and six minutes for the Liberal Party; and that during the questioning of witnesses there shall be allocated time in the following order and amount for the second round of questioning: six minutes for the Liberal Party, six minutes for the Conservative Party, six minutes for the Liberal Party, five minutes for the Conservative Party, and three minutes for the New Democratic Party.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now this is where we have questions and comments.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Technically there is no such a thing as a friendly amendment, so I will be moving an amendment, to be within the rules here, that in the first round instead of six minutes, it would be seven minutes, beginning with the government. I think this is what the procedure and House affairs committee has adopted. I think there's really a sound argument for allowing the government to go first in questioning. I think it shows respect for the government.

So, that is my amendment, that the motion be amended so that in the first round it would be seven minutes, with the order of Liberal, Conservative, NDP, and Liberal. Then the second round would be five minutes, with Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, and NDP; and the last slot for the NDP would be three minutes, for a total of 50 minutes.

That's my amending motion. The total of 50 minutes is consistent.

The Chair: Okay. Excellent.

Are there any questions and comments regarding the amendment?

Mr. Dan Ruimy: If you add them up, the NDP would get two minutes, to add up to 50 minutes. Otherwise, it actually adds up to 51 minutes on this list.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: That's two at the end, yes.

The Chair: You're correct. Thank you.

MP Ashton.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): While I understand that this is the way the math adds up, the idea here is that we're putting forward what the procedure and House affairs committee adopted. Many committees are adopting the same.

The Chair: Just for clarification, because what I have in front of me says three minutes, are you suggesting that it should actually be two minutes in the final question?

Mr. Dan Ruimy: I'm just saying that it is part of the amendment as presented.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Okay.

Ms. Niki Ashton: If I understood, you also said that this is what was adopted at the procedure and House affairs committee. But at that committee, three minutes was adopted.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: It's two minutes, by the 50-minute requirement.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Yes, but at the procedure and House affairs committee, it was three minutes.

The Chair: Somebody's math is incorrect.

Ms. Niki Ashton: We have it on good authority that at the procedure and House affairs committee, this is what was adopted: seven minutes for the first round, five minutes for everybody in the second round, and three minutes for us as the final questioner.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'm okay with—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: As long as it adds up—

Ms. Niki Ashton: That's what they adopted.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'm okay with three. It would be 51 minutes.

The Chair: It would be 51 minutes—

Ms. Niki Ashton: I think it's semantics, basically, but that is what the procedure and House affairs committee adopted.

The Chair: So the motion is to set it at three minutes—?

Mr. Mark Warawa: —which was adopted. Yes.

● (1600)

Ms. Filomena Tassi: With respect to the suggestion, it's not the timing so much as the order. I appreciate that you'd like the government to have the first spot. I have a couple of questions, though.

Outside of giving us that priority and having it set at seven minutes, what is the reason for changing the order as it is?

The other concern I have with respect to the NDP is that there are three minutes there, but with this revised order that the procedure and House affairs committee has suggested and adopted—and I understand it, but I don't think that just because somebody adopts something, everyone has to follow it. Outside of that, if you run out of time you're not going to get the three minutes; you're going to get two minutes. I understand that it often happens.

Could I hear from you, Mark, with respect to the order, because it has been changed as well as the numbers? Could I hear more about that?

Mr. Mark Warawa: The suggestion is to be consistent with the procedure and House affairs committee, if other committees are using it as a guide in order to be fair. That's the reason we are suggesting it: it's to be consistent with that committee.

We're fine with the original motion, but my amending motion was to be consistent with that committee. I'm okay with either.

The Chair: Are there any other questions at all?

We need to vote on the amendment first.

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

The Chair: Do we want to open up discussion regarding...or shall we move to the next?

Mr. Mark Warawa: I call for the question on the motion.

The Chair: We'll call the vote on the original motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: MP Robillard.

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): For the distribution of documents, I move:

> That only the clerk be authorized to distribute to the members of the Committee any documents, including motions, and that all documents which are to be distributed amongst the members must be in both official languages; and that the Clerk shall advise all witnesses appearing before the committee of this requirement.

The Chair: Are there any questions or is there discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: MP Ruimy.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: I get the fun one. For working meals, I move:

> That the Committee authorize the clerk, in consultation with the Chair, to make the necessary arrangements to provide for working meals, as may be required, and that the cost of these meals be charged to the Committee budget.

The Chair: Any questions or discussion?

MP Zimmer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I just would require that the food is good.

The Chair: It's noted; the food is good. Okay, it sounds good.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: No, that the food provided will be good.

The Chair: Fantastic.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: And the measure....

A voice: We have to proceed to the motion.

The Chair: We have to get ways and means in here to determine the measure.

Okay, all in favour of the motion?

Opposed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: MP Sangha.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: I move the following in regard to travel accommodations and living expenses of the witnesses:

> That, if requested , reasonable travel, accommodation, child care, attendant care and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses, not exceeding two (2) representatives per organization; and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

The Chair: Are there any questions or comments?

MP Zimmer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: From previous committee work that we've done, I don't see an option here to be teleconferenced, and I just wonder if that's a potential option. It saves a lot of money and might be even more convenient for the witnesses. I just wonder if it's mandated that they appear at committee. Can they appear via teleconference?

● (1605)

The Chair: Yes, traditionally they can appear via video conference.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Okay. Are the witnesses asked that as an option initially?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: It is. I just wonder whether that's in this particular part of the motion.

The Chair: It's in the invitation.

MP Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: On this, and this is covering general parameters, when we actually are going to do a study the budget has to be approved by committee. I think as routine proceedings this is necessary, but in practice we actually have to approve the cost of that budget. So there still is oversight from the committee.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments?

Moving forward, all in favour of the motion?

All opposed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: MP Tassi.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: In regard to staff at in camera meetings, I move:

> That each committee member in attendance shall be permitted to have one staff member attend any *in camera* meetings. Each party shall be permitted to have one staff member from a House officer attend *in camera* meetings.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The Chair: MP Long.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The next motion would be about transcripts of in camera meetings:

> That *in camera* meetings be transcribed and that the transcription be kept with the clerk for later consultation by members of the Committee or by their staff.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The Chair: MP Robillard. Did I do better that time?

Mr. Yves Robillard: Yes, you're getting there.

Regarding notice of motion, I move:

> That a notice of 48 hours, interpreted as two nights, be required before a member may move a substantive motion, unless it deals directly with the matter before the Committee at that time, provided that:
>
> (a) this notice be e-mailed to the Committee Clerk no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday.
>
> (b) this notice be distributed by e-mail to members in both official languages by the Clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour;

(c) notices received after the deadline hour be deemed to have been received during the next business day; and

(d) this rule does not prevent a member to give notice of a motion orally during a meeting of the Committee, in which case notice shall be deemed to have been given before the deadline that day.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any questions or comments?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Finally, MP Ruimy.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: This motion is in regard to motions during committee travel. I move:

That the Committee not undertake consideration of any substantive motion during any Committee travel.

The Chair: Any questions or comments?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Ashton.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you.

If I could take the floor for a minute, given that we just went through routine proceedings, I'd like to read a motion into the record. Obviously we can't vote on it today, but I would like to put this motion on the table formally. I move "That the Committee conduct a study of the impact of recent reforms to the employment insurance program and to employment insurance appeals; that the study include an examination of the current low rates of access to EI and their causes; that the Committee receives witnesses for five sessions; and that the government provides an answer to these recommendations."

I bring it forward here today given that we're reaching crisis proportions in Canadians' access to employment insurance across our country. This is the committee tasked with looking at EI. I'd certainly like us to consider this seriously in our next meeting.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Deltell.

● (1610)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Is there any translation here?

The Chair: There is.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I mean, it's okay for me, but I just wanted to check.

The Chair: They're doing a fantastic job behind us here.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I pay all my respects to the interpreters. I know that sometimes I speak a little bit too fast, or sometimes I hit the wall or the desk and all that stuff.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, this is what I would propose.

We Are the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. It's a very hot topic and, above all, a very compelling one that requires serious examination.

We applaud the government for taking the initiative of publishing the ministerial mandate letters. Right off the bat, the committee should hear from the minister responsible for the file under our oversight, in other words, the Honourable MaryAnn Mihychuk, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, so that she can make a presentation to the committee and answer questions regarding her mandate and objectives as they directly relate to our committee's work. I would just like to repeat that we believe the government's decision to publicly disclose the ministerial mandate letters was a good idea.

Technically speaking, Mr. Chair, must I propose a motion to that effect? I can, if you'd like.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, we can take it as a motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: What I am proposing is this: That the committee invite the Honourable MaryAnn Mihychuk, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, to appear so that she can present her ministerial mandate letter, as well as the objectives of her department, to the committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: MP Long.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't disagree with what you're saying, but let's not forget that we also have two other ministers involved in this committee, Minister Qualtrough and Minister Duclos. I think the suggestion should be that, if the committee so chooses, we have all the ministers come and chat with us about their mandates.

The Chair: MP Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you.

I agree with MP Long that we do have three ministers and that we should hear from the three ministers. The reality is that the committee is its own creation. We can decide what we want to study. But really, to be constructive and helpful in this Parliament, it would be nice to know what the priorities of the government are and what they would like us to work on. Then it's up to us as a committee to decide whether we want to do studies in that venue.

I think to begin, we should hear from the ministers on what their mandate is and what they would like us to focus on as a committee. Then we work constructively together.

I'm hopeful that Monsieur Deltell will expand his motion to have all three ministers invited.

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Chair, I'd like to say also that we should have them in one at a time.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Yes.

The Chair: MP Robillard.

Mr. Yves Robillard: I have just a little point here.

[*Translation*]

In French, we use the word "convoque".

[*English*]

You cannot *convoquer* a minister. You can ask him to be there.

Mr. Mark Warawa: We can invite him.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: That's fine. What matters is that she appear before the committee.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Yes, I understand.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: We'll choose the verb carefully.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Let's be frank. In French, the word "convoquer" means to "summon". But it's not quite that. We aren't supposed to do that. We can ask her to appear.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa: That's a fair point.

The Chair: That's fine.

MP Zimmer.

● (1615)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I'm absolutely supportive of MP Long. It's been standard practice to have ministers present to committee. It's just for us to get to know who they are and where they're going. I'm absolutely supportive.

The Chair: Are we in agreement that you will be expanding the amendments?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I will, thanks to the good tips of my colleague.

[*Translation*]

The motion would read as follows: That the committee invite the honourable ministers MaryAnn Mihychuk and Jean-Yves Duclos.

[*English*]

Who is the third?

Mr. Mark Warawa: You mean of the three ministers?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Very well. There's also Minister Qualtrough.

We'll ask them to appear before the committee so that they can explain their mandate letters, as well as the objectives they plan to achieve during their time in office.

[*English*]

The Chair: If it's okay with everyone—

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Chair, do we want to wait until next meeting for the motion? Does the committee need to step back and ponder what process we want them here for how long we want them to speak, and what topics we want them to speak on? I think it's a great idea. Absolutely, we want the three ministers here, but are we a little rushed voting on this right now, not knowing the parameters under which we're going to have the ministers here?

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Again, that's a good point from MP Long.

The motion is that we invite them. We can't force a minister to come. I think the motion, if I'm understanding it correctly, is that under the signature of our chair, an invitation goes out. At the discretion of the chair, we would find out what minister would be available and how long they would be available for. The tradition is that it is for one hour followed by another hour for the officials of that department. We would have a two-hour meeting, one hour with the minister and then another hour with the officials. The ministers would indicate who was available, when, and for how long. We can't dictate that.

I think that having an invitation sent out under the chair's signature will enable us to get to work, depending on when the ministers are available. Some may be available sooner than others. Some may not be available for months, but some may be available right away.

I think we'll leave it at the discretion of the chair to send out the invitations, and we'll see how available some ministers are.

The Chair: MP Zimmer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: My colleague Mr. Warawa already said it. I think we can get to work on this. It gives the ministers more time. The larger span of time we give them to operate within and to say when they can be here, the better for them. They might be available in the next two weeks. They may not be available in the next three months. I think it's a good question to ask now.

The Chair: MP Ashton.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I want to underscore the importance of hearing directly from the ministers under whose purview our committee is, in order to get a sense of what their agenda is and what they are working on. I echo that traditional practice is one hour with the minister, followed by an hour with officials.

I certainly hope it won't take months to hear from the three ministers. I hope they see us hearing from them as a priority so that we can get ahead with discussing pertinent topics and, of course, filter that work back to the government.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other questions or comments?

It seems to be generally accepted. Do we need to put this to a vote?

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Chair, we want to have a motion to invite the ministers to come to our committee as soon as possible. Then maybe we can have the subcommittee take a look at the parameters, what we want to ask, or the depth of that.

The Chair: That's fair.

Mr. Wayne Long: I think that should be the motion.

The Chair: All right.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: This is the end of our list of absolute must-dos today, but in terms of the next committee meeting, it's going to be on February 22 and then Wednesday, February 24. We are in this room, I believe, consistently.

Apparently next week we will on the third floor, but this is going to be the most common room we'll be in.

● (1620)

Mr. Mark Warawa: That's room 306 next week.

The Chair: Excellent.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Is that for both meetings, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, for both meetings next week, I believe it is.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: February—

The Chair: It's the 22nd and the 24th, a Monday and Wednesday.

If there's nothing else, I move to adjourn our first official meeting.