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# Standing Committee on the Status of Women

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 001**

Thursday, February 20, 2020

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Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio





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• (1105)

[*English*]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Stephanie Bond):** Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

[*Translation*]

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 official opposition.

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

[*English*]

Ms. Hutchings.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.):** I would like to nominate Karen Vecchio for the position of chair.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Ms. Hutchings that Mrs. Vecchio be elected 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 the motion carried and Mrs. Vecchio duly elected chair of the committee.

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

**The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)):** To begin, thank you so much for putting your faith in me. I look forward to doing great things for women and gender across Canada, as we all work together in the 43rd Parliament. If the committee is in agreement, we'll proceed with the election of vice-chairs.

We'll be looking for a vice-chair from the government side. May I have a nomination?

**Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** I would like to nominate Madam Sonia Sidhu for the vice-chair position.

**The Chair:** Are there any other nominations?

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

(Motion agreed to)

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

**The Chair:** Congratulations, Sonia.

**The Clerk:** I will proceed with the election of the second vice-chair. 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.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serré, you have the floor.

**Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to nominate Ms. Larouche.

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

[*English*]

(Motion agreed to)

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

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried and Madame Larouche duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

**The Chair:** We do have excellent staff.

Lindsay.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** I was under the impression that there would also be a third vice-chair. I would like to put myself forward for that.

**The Chair:** I did have confirmation earlier that PROC has gone through that, allowing a third vice-chair, and it has not been finalized. At this time, it is just two vice-chairs according to the Standing Orders. We'll see how things roll out once PROC has decided.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Could the committee make a decision if it wanted to go forward on its own, or does it have to abide by PROC?

**The Chair:** After confirming with the clerk, we cannot make a change to the Standing Order.

Sonia.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** I want to move routine motions.

**The Chair:** Go ahead please.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Madam Chair, I move:

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)

● (1110)

**The Chair:** Can I now invite the analysts to come forward?

I would like to introduce two of the most amazing women that you'll find on the Hill, who have done such a fantastic job and were part of the staff for the 42nd Parliament as well. We have with us Dominique Montpetit, an analyst at the Library of Parliament, and Clare Annett, an analyst at the Library of Parliament. We also have with Stephanie Bond, who is a procedural clerk at the House of Commons. Let's give them a warm welcome.

Go ahead, Sonia.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** I move:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five (5) members; the Chair, one Member from each party; and that the subcommittee work in the spirit of collaboration.

**The Chair:** Is there any discussion on this motion?

Lindsay.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen:** I've been involved in committees where they found it more helpful that the subcommittee roll into the full committee. It may be worth a bit of discussion that sometimes, as we need to, we put it into the regular time allocated for the meetings just to save us meetings about meetings. It's open for discussion.

**The Chair:** I know that last time, in the 42nd Parliament, we did a bit of both, so I think that as we move forward, we'll have collaboration. I have spoken to both parliamentary secretaries for this file. We're all working together. I believe that everybody's voice here needs to be equal, so having us all sit at committee doing business is very important. I think the subcommittee will meet on some things that are very important, maybe due to time limitations and things of that sort, but we'll work as much as we can as a whole committee.

(Motion agreed to)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Madam Chair, I move:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four (4) members are present, including one member of the opposition and one member of the government, but when travelling outside the parliamentary precinct, that the meeting begin after fifteen (15) minutes, regardless of members present.

(Motion agreed to)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Madam Chair, I move:

That witnesses be given ten (10) minutes for their opening statement; that at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated six (6) minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows: Round 1:

Conservative Party

Liberal Party

Bloc Québécois

New Democratic Party

For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows:

Conservative Party, five (5) minutes

Liberal Party, five (5) minutes

Conservative Party, five (5) minutes

Liberal Party, five (5) minutes

Bloc Québécois, two and a half (2.5) minutes

New Democratic Party, two and a half (2.5) minutes.

(Motion agreed to)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** I move:

That the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the Committee only when the documents are available in both official languages and that witnesses be advised accordingly.

(Motion agreed to)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** I move:

That the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the Committee and its Subcommittees.

**The Chair:** I'll make one comment on this. I know there are some restrictions of diet. Please make sure that the clerk is aware of them. We'll try to work with them.

(Motion agreed to)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** I move:

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

**The Chair:** Is there any discussion from this?

Go ahead, Gudie.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Madam Chair, first of all congratulations.

On this, I would just like to say that I think wherever possible we should avail ourselves of video conferencing technology. It's better for the environment; it's better for people travelling in weather conditions. Wherever possible, I think we should try to avail ourselves of this technology.

● (1115)

**The Chair:** Alice.

**Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC):** I concur with Ms. Hutchings' suggestion, because sometimes witnesses are not willing to come all the way. I think this is good. I second Ms. Hutchings' recommendation.

**The Chair:** This has been discussed many times. As we're looking at this issue, this is a very good way of setting these policies. We will ask the clerk to always try to see whether we can do video conferencing first and then offer the opportunity to travel as a secondary option.

We have just added that any time possible we'll use video conferencing technology.

Go ahead, Raquel.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** I have a concern that if video conferencing is almost always available, if we pass this motion, then we won't ever have anyone physically here.

I'm just wondering whether there's any consideration for folks coming physically, particularly if they are from nearby.

**The Chair:** There will be flexibility such that when witnesses are in this area, that's what we'll do as well. We will look at what works best for not only the witnesses but for our committee as well.

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

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Madam Chair, I move:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each Committee member be allowed to have one staff member at an *in camera* meeting and that one additional person from each House officer's office be allowed to be present.

**The Chair:** For the sake of anyone new, that means one staff member only. Then there will be one representative from each party; there will be somebody from the whip's office or the House leader's office for each. There will be, then, one staffer and one person representing the party as a whole.

(Motion agreed to)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Next, I move:

That one copy of the transcript of each *in camera* meeting be kept in the Committee Clerk's office for consultation by members of the Committee or by their staff.

(Motion agreed to)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Madam Chair, I move:

That a forty-eight (48) hours notice, interpreted as two (2) nights, shall be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the Committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, provided that (1) the notice be filed with the Clerk of the Committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; that (2) the motion be distributed 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; and that (3) notices received after the deadline hour or on non-business days be deemed to have been received during the next business day and that when the committee is travelling on official business, no substantive motions may be moved.

(Motion agreed to)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Madam Chair, I move:

That, in relation to Orders of Reference from the House respecting Bills,

(a) the Clerk of the Committee shall, upon the Committee receiving such an Order of Reference, write to each Member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the Committee to invite those Members to file with the Clerk of the Committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the Bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the Committee consider;

(b) suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a), at least 48 hours prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill to which the amendments relate shall be deemed to be proposed during the said consideration, provided that the Committee may, by motion, vary this deadline in respect of a given Bill; and

(c) during the clause-by-clause consideration of a Bill, the Chair shall allow a Member who filed the suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1120)

**The Chair:** Lindsay.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Madam Chair, I move:

That any motion to go in camera should be debatable and amendable, and that the committee may only meet in camera for the following purposes:

- (a) to discuss administrative matters of the committee
- (b) a draft report
- (c) briefings concerning national security;

And furthermore, minutes of in camera meetings should reflect on the results of all votes taken by the committee while in camera, including how each member voted when a recorded vote is requested.

**The Chair:** In this discussion of in camera meetings, what about when witnesses have very sensitive situations? For instance, we have had witnesses in the past who we thought maybe were fearful of doing something publicly.

Gudie.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** I would add after subsection (a) that we include the selection and consideration of witnesses. It would read, "to discuss administrative matters of the committee, including the selection and consideration of witnesses".

Then, of course, further to what you were saying, subsection (d) would be "protection of privacy of any individuals".

Karen, was that what you were referring to?

**The Chair:** Yes, that's really important.

**The Chair:** I will start from the top. The amendment is as follows:

That any motion to go in camera should be debatable and amendable, and that the committee may only meet in camera for the following purposes:

- (a) to discuss administrative matters of the committee, including the selection and consideration of witnesses
- (b) a draft report
- (c) briefings concerning national security
- (d) protection of privacy of any individuals;

And furthermore, minutes of in camera meetings should reflect on the results of all votes taken by the committee while in camera, including how each member voted when a recorded vote is requested.

We will need to vote on the amendment first.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Would it be possible to get a French version?

**The Clerk:** The amendment regarding in camera procedure reads as follows:

That any motion to go in camera should be debatable and amendable, and that the committee may only meet in camera for the following purposes:

- (a) to discuss administrative matters of the committee, including the selection and consideration of witnesses;
- (b) a draft report;
- (c) briefings concerning national security;
- (d) ensure the protection of privacy of individuals;

And furthermore, minutes of in camera meetings should reflect the results of all votes taken by the committee while in camera, including how each member voted when a recorded vote is requested.

[*English*]

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

Andréanne, do you have comments or concerns in regard to that?

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** No, it's okay, thank you. It's all right.

[English]

**The Chair:** The vote is on the amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

**The Chair:** Seeing no other routine proceedings, does the committee wish to discuss any future business at this time?

**Hon. Alice Wong:** I think we have all received something from the Journals of the House of Commons regarding the supplementary estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020. This probably needs to be looked at, just as a reminder.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Alice, for putting that forward.

I believe everybody has received this. It was in our email last night. There will be the estimates for this committee. In the past we have welcomed the minister and members of the department as we have gone through these expenses in case we had any questions. Would we like to have a discussion on this?

Go ahead, Gudie.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** I don't know, Madam Chair, what your policy is or how we're going to get to motions, but I would like to suggest, because we have so many new members at the table, that we allow part of one of our first meetings for what I will call Department 101, so that the department can come and give us a brief analysis of where they've been and where they are on some of the stuff. It might help us in preparing and working going forward. That's just for the consideration of the committee.

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

There are a couple of things we do need to take into consideration. The estimates need to be done.

What is the deadline for approval of the estimates?

You said March 24, so we'd like to get everything done ahead of time. At the same time it's really important that we start looking at motions, recognizing that we need to get witnesses here, we need to make a study plan and we need to look at the calendar.

Our next meeting is scheduled for, next week, the 25th, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. During that time we have a few options that we could look at. Gudie has indicated—I hope you don't mind if I use first names—the opportunity to listen to the department, to hear about the work they have done in the past, as well as the work they'll be doing in the future, and there may be things we're not aware of.

Would the committee like to see the members come in here so that we can have a 101 on FEWO?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Ms. Wong.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Madam Chair, there are now debates in the House about issues that relate to women. Once something is sent to us, I think our new members need to be briefed on how we deal with that. It is a major job of our committee to go over some of the bills or motions that are sent to us to review. I can see a lot of new members here who probably need a briefing as well. I think, when

we do the briefing, that part is most important as well. I'd like to ask the chair to include that in our briefing.

**The Chair:** We'll make sure that information is relayed to the department so that as we're going through these briefings it is also discussed. I think we had one bill in the 42nd Parliament, Bill C-337, but there are also opportunities for us to do some incredible studies.

One of the things we've started discussing is getting those motions so we can start getting our work done. This does put a lot of stress on the staff of this committee, but I know we would like to get started. We are already a couple of months in, so let's get the work done.

After discussion with all four parties at this table, we talked about trying to get motions in by tomorrow evening, in both French and English. I see it says in here four o'clock. I will ask the clerk whether there is any opportunity to extend that. I know the Bloc is working on additional motions. Is there a way we can extend that until later on in the evening?

Lindsay, you look concerned.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** When we've provided motions, they've gone to the clerk, and then the clerk provided translation. Is that not the case in this committee? I know with reports—

**The Chair:** Yes, we do both.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** —at the end of studies, we're responsible for translation but not necessarily for motions.

**The Chair:** They will take care of that. If you do not have them in both official languages, they will still be accepted. I was just looking at time frames, and whether there was a way we could do it to help out the staff, but whatever you can get done is fantastic.

After speaking to the clerks, I will say it has to be four o'clock.

• (1130)

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Chair, I have a question.

We have to file the motions before 4 p.m. tomorrow. According to what I understood, we have to send motions 48 hours in advance, so two nights in advance. If we extend this period, we will not be able to adopt the motions on Tuesday.

[English]

**The Chair:** According to the standing order and to the routine motions we've just done, they have to be in by four o'clock tomorrow. You can forget about having to put it in English for yourself. If you can get them in, in French, that would be fantastic. To allow the two sleeps and the two business days, they will have to be in by 4 p.m. tomorrow so that we can consider them on Tuesday.

I'm going to go into an informal discussion, so that we can all discuss this.

I know that there are many motions we want to put forward and there are lots of opportunities for us to study some great things. I know that there are some priorities from each party.

I sat down and spoke quickly with Gudie, as well as Scott and Matthew, about what we should do. On Tuesday at 11 o'clock we will have the department here for the 101. Then at 12 o'clock we will have a meeting where we can discuss the motions and look at them to see what we see as our priority. I think we will see many motions that are very much alike. We can discuss how we want to move forward, so that we can start on a study.

We don't need that 48-hour notice because we're doing this in committee business, but if everybody can get that information in.... I think the most important thing is that we're going to find a lot of motions that are similar. It will probably be just changing some words, so that there will be consensus on everyone's motions as we move forward.

Go ahead, Alice.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** I think that's a great idea.

Very often, when a motion is not well worded, it won't get passed even if we passed it here. That's why we would rather do a good job and not rush through just to get it done.

I agree that we should look at them overall and set our priorities, and also look at the wording in every sense. Sometimes motions get shot down—even by our own parties—because they are not well worded.

Yes, I agree one hundred per cent.

**The Chair:** Marc Serré.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to say something about the 48 hours' notice. Motions may be drafted in one official language only, but if a new motion was not filed 48 hours in advance, it can still be presented if it concerns a new matter. Before presenting their motions, parties should ensure that they are in both official languages.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm going to pass this to Stephanie.

Anything that will be distributed through the clerk's office must be in both official languages. When we're doing business, anything that's moved can be in one language. It does not have to be in both languages when it's put forward verbally. Anything that's tabled must be in both official languages.

Does that answer your question, Marc?

Go ahead, Alice.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Sometimes the French version and the English version may not match. Many of us here are bilingual. We should allow friendly amendments just because of the language, to make it clearer. We shouldn't shoot down a motion just because of that. We've done it before.

**The Chair:** Is there anything further on this discussion?

I'm looking at our schedule for next week. We have two dates: Tuesday, February 25 and Thursday, February 27.

On February 25 we'll be doing the motions, as well as speaking to the department. We need to look at what we're going to be doing on February 27.

I don't know whether that gives us an appropriate amount of time. Perhaps we can look at the estimates at that time. I just want to throw it out to you. Perhaps we will have already decided what the study is going to be, and maybe that's going to be enough time. We'll invite the department, the department will come back and we'll do the estimates and discuss what our motion is. That may be too quick, but if we decide on Tuesday, perhaps the department can come here and also do the briefing on the specific topic we're going to be discussing and studying.

Yes, Gudie.

• (1135)

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Karen, I think that's good. We'll hear from the department. We'll have a chance to look at all the motions, and I agree with you. I think there are going to be similarities, and to Alice's point, we might need to tweak a little bit how we get to there, and who knows? We might have one that we can get right out of the blocks on the 27th, so maybe we should wait until then.

**The Chair:** I think we're doing really well, so that's wonderful.

Once the motions we have decided on.... If we cannot come to an agreement on Tuesday, of course, that will be extended. Looking at this committee, I think there are going to be some great ideas that we can put forward, and we'll have a majority decide on one, so we could possibly start a study. Perhaps we'll also look at the estimates on that Thursday. As I said, everybody will have those estimates in their mailbox, so let's pencil that in for Thursday's discussion.

This afternoon, as many of you may know, we have an informal meeting with Harriet Harman. She's an MP. She will be here from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in room 225A in West Block.

I'd like to just find out now who will be able to attend today. There will be four or five of us; that's wonderful. I think it would be great if anyone else can make it. I recognize that we have tight schedules.

We'll have the briefing from the departmental officials as well as our motions on Tuesday. On Thursday we'll do the department with the estimates and hopefully be able to start our study.

Is there anything else you're concerned with?

Many times, when we're going through the estimates, the minister will also be asked to join. Is it the will of the committee to ask the minister to also attend Thursday's meeting, if we can get the estimates done?

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** I can ask her. I know Minister Monsef is willing to come to committee any time, but I can't speak for her until I have staff check with her office.

**The Chair:** We will send a formal invitation.

All those in favour of inviting the minister to attend?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** I know I keep referring back to the 42nd Parliament, but I think it's really important that we have all sides of the story, all sides of the studies. In the past I have asked that, when you are sending in your lists, you prioritize those people who you ultimately want to see. Those are going to be your number ones, two and threes. That person who's number 20 is, if you're thinking you've got to put somebody in, but if we don't hear from them, that will be okay. I would ask that all parties, when you're putting in your lists, to please prioritize them. Who are your top three? Who are your top five? Who are your top 10? I think that brings different ideas to it all.

Please send those lists in, and then we can work them in. In the past, the clerk and the analysts have worked really well putting groups together to make sure that, when we're focusing on a specific topic, we have groups that can all work together. I know that they have done an excellent job on that, so there might be a little bit of a theme to those panels.

One other discussion is about timing. Is there a preference? I've seen different committees do different things. Is there a limit to

how many witnesses you would like to see? It could be one hour of two or three witnesses, for example. Is there anything that you've seen that you want to adopt from other committees that you think would be in our best interest, or should we just continue with small, one-hour, two- or three-witness panels moving forward?

Gudie.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** I think we have to see what the motion is before we can determine how many people we need. I also think we have to make sure we have representation from coast to coast to coast, rural and urban, and that we have indigenous peoples and LGBTQ people. We make sure we have full representation of whatever we discuss.

• (1140)

**The Chair:** That sounds very fair.

Are there any other questions or comments?

Since there are no questions or comments, our next meeting will be next Tuesday at 11 a.m. There will be a notice sent out to you with a reminder of this meeting and the agenda. I look forward to meeting with everybody.

Motions should be in by four o'clock tomorrow. I know that we talked about doing different things, but let's get working on this together.

Seeing no other business, today's meeting is adjourned.

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