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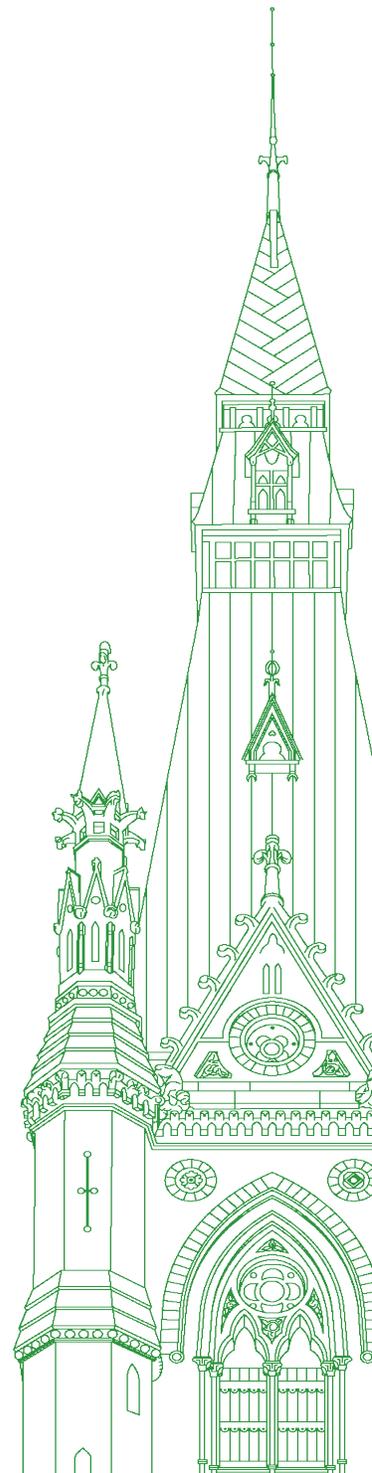
Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology

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Thursday, February 20, 2020



Chair: Mrs. Sherry Romanado

Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. We are starting the second meeting of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

As you know, on Tuesday we passed some routine motions, one of which was to instruct the clerk on ordering food, because this committee sits over the course of the lunch hour. I wanted to let members know, if you have any dietary restrictions, allergies, anything like that, to please let the clerk know so that we won't have a member falling ill. We wouldn't want that. If you could let the clerk know, that would be great. You don't have to do it now, but I don't want anyone falling ill.

With that, as you know, we have quite a lot of business in front of us, including various notices of motions that have been put forth to the committee. Further to the last meeting, we have also received notice with respect to Bill C-4. I believe we need to have a motion to proceed with that. I see that Ms. Rempel Garner is ready to go forward.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move this motion expecting that my colleagues will slightly amend its scope, including my colleague from the Bloc.

I move “That pursuant to the correspondence received from the Standing Committee on International Trade on Wednesday, February 19, 2020, the committee (1) issue an open call for stakeholders to submit briefings on Bill C-4 as it relates to (a) auto rules of origin, (b) the impact of USMCA on the aluminum and steel industries, (c) procurement and changes to intellectual property, no later than 4 p.m. on Friday, February 21, 2020.

(2) That the committee invite witnesses on the same topic to appear before committee for no fewer than four hours before noon Eastern Standard Time on Monday, February 24, 2020, and that this meeting be televised.

That the committee schedule a two-hour meeting on the evening of Monday, February 24 to draft recommendations to the Standing Committee on International Trade; and

That the committee issue a letter of recommendation on these topics to the Standing Committee on International Trade no later than 12 p.m. on Tuesday, February 25, 2020, the deadline imposed by that committee.”

I understand that there might be some suggestions by my colleague from the Bloc on the motion's scope, but the goal of this, Madam Chair, is to meet the rather intense timelines and to ensure that stakeholders are able to provide written feedback.

Madam Chair, while this is not part of my motion, I would also seek, if possible, to work with the Standing Committee on International Trade to see if we could perhaps be privy to their witness list or any draft testimony that has been given to date so that we can take that into consideration as part of our deliberations.

The Chair: Perfect.

I'm opening the floor for comments with respect to the motion.

Ms. Gray.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the motion on the floor, and I will be supporting it. We're being put in a situation where this committee has an unreasonably rushed timeline to look at legislation. If we agree to study the legislation—meaning the sections from CUSMA that have been sent to our committee—realistically speaking, from today onwards we have two business days to prepare questions, get witnesses from across the country potentially, and then have only two hours for deliberation on the Tuesday. I think this motion giving more time on the Monday is reasonable, although it is still an extremely unrealistic timeline for us to meet.

It's our duty as parliamentarians to examine legislation, and this timeline—even with the proposed motion—makes it really challenging for us to properly fulfill our duties and to fulfill our obligations in the House as defined. I say this especially when we look back at the tone set by the government in the throne speech, where there was a lot of conversation about the spirit of collaboration and working together. One of the things the Prime Minister stated in the House of Commons was the about the need for collaboration in the House and to work together, and mandate letters also mention the need for meaningful engagement with the government caucus and opposition members of Parliament. I'm not trying to delay things here and I know that we need to move forward, but again, recognizing that it's our duty to think deeply and look at legislation closely, the calls of this government to hurry this up and move it along by giving us two business days with a two-hour meeting are unrealistic.

This does allow more opportunity for us to hear from witnesses, but still, it's a very unreasonable deadline. We have to go back to why we're in this situation, where our trading partners have had more time on this. The government here did not bring CUSMA to first reading until January 29, so now we're in this position of having to hurry it up. It's important for us to do our due diligence, in particular since the government has not provided economic impact analysis. This puts us in a really difficult position, with a very tight timeline. This is not good governance; it's flawed and I don't believe we're properly fulfilling our duties, but we're doing the best we can, based on the timeline that has been imposed on us.

That's where we are.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other comments regarding the motion?

I will go to Mr. Erskine-Smith, and then we have Mr. Masse and Monsieur Lemire.

Go ahead.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): To Mrs. Gray's point, we do have a tight timeline, and when I was reading the correspondence from the international trade committee, I understood our job to be fairly narrow, rather than to duplicate work by other committees. I thought this was a tight timeline, but when I went to the sections that we are to cover, I realized they include only a very limited aspect of the Competition Act, a bit of the Copyright Act and trademarks, and some of the Invest in Canada Act. That's the bulk of it to be honest. This is what we're dealing with here; it's not the full trade agreement.

The only comment I would have about the motion is that with regard to the auto rules of origin, the impact of the USMCA on the aluminum and steel industries, I don't know what the amendment by Mr. Lemire is, but if we're already worried about a tight timeline, it's a little odd to expand our mandate in such a short period of time at the same time as complaining about compressed schedules.

• (1110)

The Chair: Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): First, I want to thank the mover of the motion for working on this quickly and getting it in front of us. That was a tight timeline itself, so I do appreciate that; I'll be supporting the motion.

I've sat at a couple of meetings at the international trade committee, where they are doing some of this work as well. I think it is a very tight timeline, no doubt about it, but at the same time, I've been the recipient of several governments' closure motions in the House of Commons without being able to participate, so I'll reflect on the reduction of opportunities. I think this is about the best we can do with it.

I would encourage some testimony from the trade department, if we could, related to the subject matter, and also maybe ask their researchers if they have anything they can share with us, and also get a call-out for written submissions right away. Obviously, we're going to have some logistical issues related to trying to get people

here, and it would be an opportune time to try to reach out to those who want to get something in today and tomorrow after the motion. It's unfortunate, but we either have to deal with this or not, and I'd rather deal with it. I think the member's put forth a plan here that at least we can do, and I appreciate that.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Lemire, you have the floor.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Thank you Madam Chair.

My intervention concerns agriculture and the possibility of adding a point about agricultural producers. I leave it to you to choose the wording. It can simply be about the agri-food industry. What I'm particularly interested in is the dairy industry. It would be important for the committee to know the impact of the bill on this industry.

Thank you.

The Chair: We are discussing an amendment right now.

[English]

Are there any comments on the amendment?

Mr. Ehsassi.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): I would speak to the amendment. I think we are largely supportive of this motion, with the three issues that have been identified, but as has been suggested by other members, this is a tight timeline. We want to ensure that there isn't overlap in terms of the issues being considered.

From what I have heard, the agri-food portions of the agreement are being considered by the agriculture committee, so I'm not necessarily convinced that this committee weighing in on that particular aspect of the agreement would be particularly helpful. The agriculture committee has already heard testimony and has examined the portions of the agreement that relate to agriculture.

The Chair: Are there any further comments with respect to the amendment to include agriculture?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I think it is important to include this point because there are special aspects to the dairy industry. I don't mind being explicit, if you wish, but I would like to see the dairy industry mentioned, because it will experience serious consequences. It's important to look at it from the perspective of the industry as a whole.

I will not add to the list of speakers on this subject, but I think it is important to bring these issues to the committee's attention. I am moving a formal motion, in the hope that it will be adopted.

The Chair: Could you repeat the amendment before you?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Yes. I would add one point to include the agri-food industry. We could, if you agree, mention the dairy industry specifically.

[English]

The Chair: We have a question from Madam Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Madam Chair, is there not a way of checking the exact wording of what the agricultural committee is looking at, to see if there is possible overlap or duplication? Presumably, the terms of reference for that committee are well known. I'm wondering if the clerk can check.

• (1115)

The Chair: If you will give us a moment, the clerk will double-check the letter from the chair of the trade committee and the exact articles of Bill C-4 that were mandated. We will be back to you in a moment.

Mr. Erskine-Smith.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: I just have a clarification question. It's odd to me that we're really faced with, what, six hours of...?

If people want to send briefs, I don't care what they send their briefs on; that's fine. If they want to duplicate briefs that they send to us and send to agriculture, go for it: copy and paste. But when it comes to our six hours when we're presumably going to do the work of this committee, are we going to have witnesses? Are we going to have the dairy farmers in? Are we going to have the auto manufacturers in? Or are we going to do our job on this particular piece of CUSMA and bring witnesses in to speak to the issues we're tasked with dealing with?

Like, I legitimately don't know, with only six hours, what we're actually doing here.

The Chair: Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: I think we're trying to make the best of a situation here. That's the bottom line.

I'm open to the amendment, because the problem with agri-food is that it crosses over from marketing to manufacturing, production, trade and quotas. It's a series of different things. We're probably only going to get a quick snippet of everything here. I'd just rather get 'er done the best we can. By adding another person here, it will probably take out maybe one or two witnesses from the others, but again, it will be a shallow, quick strike anyway on some of this stuff. We'll have to rely on written submissions if we want specific recommendations.

The Chair: Give us one moment. We're just verifying what the agriculture committee has.

Mr. Francis Lord: If we look at the motion from the Standing Committee on International Trade, the agriculture committee will be looking at amendments to the Export and Import Permits Act, the Fertilizers Act and the Canada Grain Act. I can't say more than that, but strictly from the motion from international trade committee, that is the legislation that the bill is amending.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Ehsassi.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Looking at the export and import aspect of the agreement, are there issues that are squarely of concern to our colleague on quotas? It would appear to me that would cover the issue that you're speaking to.

Given the tight timelines to ensure that we have witnesses by Monday and that we would essentially just be dabbling in this, I think that wouldn't be a particularly productive use of our time.

The Chair: Do we have any other comments?

Mr. Patzer.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): I don't see any issue with adding this extra point in here, on a couple of grounds, one being the possibility of overlap. Seeing as how we have such a small window here, I don't think we're going to be overlapping any of the other studies the other committees are going to be doing. If we want to be able to have a fulsome discussion here, I don't think we need to let other committees tell us what we can or can't be studying as well, right?

These three points flow nicely with adding this fourth point as well, so I see no harm in adding it. Quite frankly, the vast majority of the people who will be speaking on aluminum and steel from the manufacturing aspect are going to be agricultural-based companies and exporter groups.

I think there is good value in adding ag and agriculture producers to the motion.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other questions or comments?

Seeing none, we will now call the vote on the amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Now we will go back to the original motion with the amendment—the addition of agriculture—and will make sure that we have the exact wording.

Is there any other debate or comments with respect to the rest of the motion?

I have a question for Ms. Rempel Garner.

With respect to the four hours prior to noon on Monday, February 24, would that be for meetings starting on Monday, or meetings as of the end of this meeting—so meetings tomorrow, Friday and Monday? I want to get clarity on that, if you could.

• (1120)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Sure. I'm just thinking that, for the sake of the analysts and the clerk and other colleagues, we're probably going to need at least 24 hours to invite witnesses. The purpose of this motion was to get a notice out today. I don't know what the protocol is, but I would assume it's a press release or something, an open call to stakeholders for written submissions to be received by noon on Monday. I guess some people will be working on the weekend.

Perhaps that call could also include that if there is already stuff prepared to get it in as soon as possible, which the analysts could then distribute to the committee so we could start reviewing it over the weekend. I would think that witness names should be in ASAP, for obvious reasons.

For the four hours on Monday morning, I know there was some interest from my colleagues on perhaps having the commissioner come in for part of that. I'm looking at my colleagues across the way, if they want to speak to that. Then it would be the typical four-witness panels, and then as many as we have....

What I'm also hoping is that, depending on how many witnesses we have, with any additional time we have that morning, we can start considering evidence. The analysts are going to need time. I think their Monday night is going to be fairly busy. That way, we can start putting a report together and then perhaps consider the final version on Tuesday. That would hopefully give us enough time in the afternoon to turn it around in both official languages. Giddy-up.

The Chair: Thank you for the clarity.

Mr. Erskine-Smith.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: It sounds as though we'll have a lot of different witnesses who are interested in submitting briefs and maybe attending. However, in addition to other witnesses, the first witness I think would be useful—and who I know would be available Monday morning and I was hoping would have been available today—is the lead negotiator, who could then explain why we are seeing some of the changes we're seeing. If we want to put some questions to him and the officials with him about other provisions within the context of the motion, I think that would be fair game, obviously, as well.

I think that would be a useful starting point for Monday morning. I know he would be available.

The Chair: Is there any further debate on the motion before you?

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

The Chair: In addition to the motion that is before us, we have some other business in front of us. We have various notices of motion. Additionally, the committee has received the notice of tabling of the supplementary estimates (B) for us to discuss. Because we are in committee business, I would like to ask the committee how they would like to proceed.

Do we want to proceed with immediately discussing Bill C-4, given the very short timeline that we have to discuss this with respect to potential witnesses, or would we like to maybe give a deadline of when we could submit our witness lists to the clerk? I am throwing this out there. I am looking at the clerk, who is probably hoping to get that list sooner rather than later.

Ms. Rempel Garner.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I'm looking to colleagues for input on this. I would really like to get the witness list from trade, if possible, for us to consider. If we could get that, I'm thinking tomorrow morning for witness lists coming in. Is nine o'clock tomorrow morning acceptable so that we can consider the information that comes in and talk to colleagues. Also—I'm just putting it out there—I would be willing to have informal conversations as well, because I'm thinking we're going to have overlap.

The Chair: Okay. Ms. Lambropoulos.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Is that a deadline for submitting our own witnesses as well—tomorrow at nine o'clock?

The Chair: Is that acceptable to everybody?

[*Translation*]

Do you agree that we submit our witness lists to the clerk tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m.?

[*English*]

Mr. Masse and then Mr. Ehsassi.

Mr. Brian Masse: Are we capable of doing teleconferences as well?

• (1125)

The Chair: I'll let the clerk answer that.

The Clerk: It's just the logistics of them. If we can set those up in time, we can for sure. Depending on where the witness is located, having less than 48 hours' notice is incredibly challenging. If we can do it, we will.

Mr. Brian Masse: Thank you. I appreciate that.

The Chair: Mr. Ehsassi.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Just in terms of timing—and this could be just me being confused—if the deadline for our receipt of the witness list from trade is nine o'clock tomorrow, could the deadline for us to consider who we want to invite be around noon or one o'clock, just to give us an opportunity to review it thoroughly?

The Chair: I don't think the deadline to receive the list from trade was nine o'clock tomorrow morning. We're going to ask the clerk to see if we can get that as soon as possible and circulate it so that, in your deliberations of who you would like to invite, you can eliminate people who have already provided testimony. I believe that is correct.

Ms. Rempel Garner.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: That doesn't stop us from inviting people again. I know that this might not be possible, but whatever information we can get from the analysts at the trade committee, with regard to whether there's any sort of summary of evidence or any sort of preliminary stuff.... I don't know how that works procedurally. I'm just thinking that we could even start looking at the blues to inform our question writing, our witness lists and our evidence.

The Chair: I'll turn to the analyst.

Mr. Francis Lord: I've just asked the clerk to distribute to you a research paper on CUSMA by the library. It covers many of the things in this motion. I think it's about 40 pages long. It's selected information linked to the clauses of the bill. That's going to be useful to you.

I can't guarantee that I'm going to be able to create a briefing note that is tailored to this committee by Monday morning, but I will be reading the briefings that come in so that we're ready to help you draft recommendations by Monday night. That would be depending on the size of it.

The only constraint is translation. If you approve it by noon, then that's a four-hour translation window. It's three hours, more realistically speaking. We're looking at something that is maybe 800 words. We could do some of the translation ourselves, but we're not as qualified as the House translators.

The Chair: Ms. Rempel Garner.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: That's why I'm thinking that for the meeting on Monday night if we can at least get it part of the way there, on Tuesday it will be a little easier in the afternoon to get that done. But here we are, right?

The Chair: I just want to make sure in terms of clarity that the proposal we agreed on in terms of the motion is that this committee, from my understanding from the analysts, will receive a briefing note from the clerk of the trade committee with respect to Bill C-4, the new NAFTA, the CUSMA. It will be circulated for everyone to give us a chance to read it. We will see if we can get a witness list from the clerk. As soon as we can get it, we will definitely share that with you.

If it's possible for all parties to provide witness lists to the clerk of this committee by 9 a.m. tomorrow, again, that can be adjusted if we only receive the list of witnesses from the trade committee tomorrow morning. I want to be flexible, understanding that if you haven't received the information, I don't want to penalize you for not having that information in front of you.

If we do receive it today, can we say that by 9 o'clock tomorrow morning you would provide your witness lists? That way, it gives the clerk time to actually invite folks for Monday morning and make sure they are prepared and able to come on Monday.

I just want to double-check with respect to the timing for availability. We will try to have a meeting of this committee from.... I'm looking at a four-hour window. Just to make sure, are you suggesting an 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. meeting of this committee on Monday morning?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Unfortunately, yes, or nine until one.

The Chair: Okay.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: My colleagues' preference....

The Chair: Then, for a second meeting in the evening, could you provide a suggestion, perhaps, for committee members?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I'm looking for the will of the room, but what I'm thinking is it would be from eight to 12, and then we'd have written submissions in by 12. That would give us the afternoon, in theory, to consider a written.... This is so crazy. It gives us the afternoon to consider thousands of pages of evidence, and then we should be meeting again at five or four, post QP...?

I'm looking to my colleagues.

• (1130)

The Chair: Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: Why don't we do it right after QP? We treat it like a regular meeting and see how long that goes for us. No matter what time we pick, we're probably going to have problems. I do worry a bit about people getting into Ottawa on Monday morning. I'll just raise that. I know that people will make their travel plans right now. It won't be a problem for me, at any rate, but for some people, with regard to their flights getting in there, it's a challenge.

At any rate, it is what it is, and I think that right after QP we'll get back at it and see if we can finish the job and get it done.

The Chair: Ms. Lambropoulos.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I'm okay with the 8-to-12 meeting. However, can we push the afternoon meeting until a bit later? I don't have any staff on the Hill at the moment, and I'm going to be trying my best to come up with some good recommendations. A little bit later would help in my case.

The Chair: Any suggestions, Ms. Rempel Garner?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Five o'clock?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. We will convene a meeting at 8 now. If we do not have any witnesses available.... I think we might have the chief negotiator available, but we'll double-check the availability of witnesses.

If there are no witnesses available at 8 a.m. on Monday morning, do you still want the meeting to start at 8 a.m.? Or would you like us to advise you of when witnesses are actually available? I know that I'm getting into the logistics here, but I want to make sure that folks know what we're in for.

Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: On all of these, I'm going to cede to your judgment on how to deal with these logistics and also even on dealing with witnesses and so forth. We're on a tight timeline, so I'm comfortable with having you make a couple of independent calls on these things, Madam Chair, with the window being so tight.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Rempel Garner.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I would just reiterate the comment that my colleague Mr. Masse made earlier. If we can have teleconferences, let's try to get that done.

The Chair: Absolutely. In terms of efficiency, I agree.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Also, given that we're doing this on Monday morning, there might be logistics with people on the west coast and in Alberta and Saskatchewan, so we can try to accommodate that as well. If there's somebody who can't be accommodated in that morning block and there's some consensus, I would leave it to your discretion to see when we're going to be doing that on Monday. I'm planning to clear the day. I am happy to leave that to the discretion of the analysts, but where possible we can use teleconferences as opposed to excluding someone because they can't get child care or get on a plane at the last minute when we're inviting them to speak.

The Chair: Absolutely. In terms of efficiency, I think this is definitely the way to go.

Based on the recommendations that we get from you for witnesses, we will immediately start communicating with them to see about their availability for an invitation on Monday, taking into consideration that inviting someone from B.C. to present at 8 a.m. might be a problem. Perhaps we can invite them to the later meeting that's happening. Of course, we will get back to you, and the clerk will let us know the timing. I appreciate your flexibility on this. I know there's a tight timeline.

With that, we have some notices of motions that have been put forth to the committee. If it is the will of the committee, perhaps we can look at those.

Yes, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Are we on the topic of discussing motions for future business?

The Chair: The motions that we have received, yes.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Okay. Actually, I'll cede the floor to my colleague Mr. Masse because I think he is probably going to go ahead.

The Chair: Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As you know, I submitted a motion. I was hoping that as we start to plan for witnesses for a larger study, we could maybe deal with this first for two days, for when we come back, allowing us thereby to do the study and then maybe the estimates for next week. We could then get into this for a couple of days, and then we'd be done. We would get at least a couple of things achieved. We would get a better understanding of the situation facing people getting fraudulent phone calls and so forth. Second, there would be some good information related to this on protection for people and consumers. Then we would have it nice and neat and clean. It would open up to us the opportunity to do more planning toward these other studies, which are much more comprehensive and sophisticated than this one. This one's pretty direct. I was hoping we could move that and do it as our first hit.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Masse.

He's referring to the motion that was brought forth to this committee at the first meeting on February 18. I'm not sure whether you all have it in front of you. I can read it out:

That the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, hold immediate hearings with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Canada's telecommunications companies and other telecom experts and advocacy groups, to better understand (a) the influx of fraud calls to Canadians' home phones and cellular devices including robocalls, ghost calls, and spam calls, (b) to give an update on the successes and failures of the National Do-Not-Call List, and (c) to outline the September 2020 STIR/SHAKEN measures and how this will benefit Canadian consumers.

That is the motion before us, with the addition of a suggested timeline of when it could be done: March 10 and 12.

We sit next week. Obviously, next Tuesday's meeting will be allocated to Bill C-4 to wrap up anything remaining. Next Thursday's meeting will be to discuss what we will be doing. Then we have a riding week. It is the following week, when we're back on the Hill,

from March 9 to 13. So this would be on March 10 and 12, if the committee is in agreement.

First we will agree on the actual motion. Then, do we agree on the timing? That being before the committee, I leave the floor open for comments.

Mr. Erskine-Smith.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: It's a good idea because our next day is March 24. That gives us a lot of time to plan for a more comprehensive study. It sounds a bit ambitious if it's going to be two days, so probably one day would be the telcos and another day would be RCMP and CRTC, and maybe we won't get as many other advocates, but I think it's a good idea.

The Chair: Are there any other comments? Okay, I will put the motion to the committee for a vote.

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

The Chair: We will schedule them, ideally, for March 10 and 12.

Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: We have some specific witnesses in there, but I'd encourage members to submit witnesses for the meetings, too.

The Chair: We will start preparing the calendar, and if you have specific witnesses that you would like to invite to those meetings, get that information to the clerk. Obviously, we'll start inviting them as soon as we can.

Mr. Brian Masse: Okay.

The Chair: That extra riding week will assist in getting people lined up for those two meetings.

Mr. Brian Masse: For sure.

The Chair: Of course we will leverage technology, and if we can get folks to do it by video conferencing from outside the Ottawa area, that would be helpful as well.

Mr. Brian Masse: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

If you want to suggest witnesses for this study...

[*English*]

Should we set a timeline for receiving witnesses?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Could we maybe dispense with that after we get through Monday and Tuesday?

The Chair: Absolutely. Perhaps we can talk about the witness list for that second study next Thursday. Is that agreeable to the committee?

Okay.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Something I might suggest is that we reserve maybe five minutes at the end of that meeting just to set that.

The Chair: Thank you. We will do that.

Yes, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I don't have a standard motion in front of me, but I will make it up as I go along. I move "That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee review the supplementary estimates and invite the minister to committee to appear with department officials at the same meeting and report back to the House"—or whatever the standard order is for reviewing supplementary estimates—"on Thursday, February 27."

• (1140)

The Chair: I'll open the floor to debate to discuss the supplementary estimates (B) and also to invite ministers and departmental officials.

Is that correct?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Correct, and I would just note that there are several ministers who are associated with the supplementary estimates attached to this committee. I'm looking to my colleagues, but I would extend that to both the industry and economic development ministers, as well as departmental officials from regional development agencies and any other associated departments.

The Chair: Mr. Dreesen is not here, but would the motion be brought forward to this committee to invite the ministers of each portfolio be included in this one, or should we keep this as a separate motion?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I would never speak on behalf of Mr. Dreesen. He's quite the character, so I would leave it him to move that when he so desires.

The Chair: Perfect, thank you so much. Thank you for the clarity.

We have a motion on the floor to consider supplementary estimates (B) next Thursday, February 27.

I am opening the floor to discussion.

Seeing none, I will now call the vote. All in favour?

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

The Chair: Thank you.

We also have additional motions that have been tabled. We will park Mr. Dreesen's until he is back and would like to move it. We have three motions brought forth by Mr. Jowhari. The first reads:

That the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology study the regulation of telecommunications including, but not limited to, an examination of changes to the Telecommunications Act recommended by the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel.

I will bring that one forward first, and I'm opening the floor.

Mr. Jowhari, is there anything you would like to speak about on this motion?

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): No, that motion stands open to—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: On a point of order, Madam Sherry, my colleague has to move his motion. You have to open the floor and ask who would like to move it.

The Chair: Thank you. I'm new.

Mr. Jowhari, would you like to move the motion?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Yes, I'd like to officially move the motion forward.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: If you want, I can read it again:

That the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology study the regulation of telecommunications including, but not limited to, an examination of changes to the Telecommunications Act recommended by the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel.

The Chair: I would like to now open the floor.

Ms. Rempel Garner.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I know we've had some preliminary conversations. I don't think this particular motion captures the scope of what we wanted to do with regard to the study of the telecommunications industry.

Please indulge me, Madame Chair, while I pull up the motion on my phone here. I think there has been quite a bit of study of this in previous Parliaments. I'm probably inclined not to support it, but perhaps we can work the concepts into a different motion.

I'm more interested in looking at the affordability and accessibility of wireless as well as mobile, and we could probably look to the future of the 5G operating environment. There's going to be a lot more data transferred in that particular operating environment. I think there's an opportunity for this committee to review of some of the privacy components contained in the Minister's mandate letter, which are also going to be precipitated by this issue.

For me—and I've expressed this to colleagues before—something that Parliament hasn't looked at is the concept of personal data rights and data ownership. I would point the committee to article 20 of the GDPR—the European Union legislation—which talks about, in layman's terms, essentially the right of individuals to be able to contact a company that owns their data and say that the company has to give their data back to them. Similar legislation around people's rights to be able to tell companies that they can't sell their data has recently become law in California.

Those two concepts together have given rise to concepts like data co-operatives where, given that people now have those rights, intermediaries could, in theory, act as a co-operative to sell data back to companies that are using this. We haven't really studied that concept in this Parliament, and I don't think it's necessarily in opposition to the digital charter. I think it's complementary to it. As this concept emerges, we will need to chat about what the regulatory environment looks like and if this is something that Canada is willing to consider, especially as other jurisdictions are moving into this area, and especially with regard to free trade. I also think that Canada is a player in this regard because we're a smaller market and we might be able to adopt some of these changes.

I don't know if my colleagues feel like that, but I'm not inclined to support this motion because I don't think it captures the spirit of what we were talking about. I would like to work with this committee to capture some of the essence of it and perhaps make it a little broader, so that we're talking about access and affordability within wireless broadband and mobile, as well as about data ownership, given the ubiquitousness of data transfer that will come in a 5G operating environment. That's where we would want to go.

If colleagues are more comfortable having this discussion in camera, I'm happy to do that as well.

• (1145)

The Chair: We have Mr. Masse and then we'll have Madame Lambropoulos.

Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: For the [*Inaudible—Editor*] submitted, I see that it probably could work somewhat and absolutely cross over with the subject matter a bit, as well. I see that perhaps we could refine something to make it a little more specific.

I'm open to the subject matter. It's about how to go about doing it. The individual motion needs to be worked with your other motion and maybe other components for a larger picture of things related to it.

On a positive note, I really like your motion on clean technologies. I don't think this committee has even studied clean technologies before.

On the other one, we might need some reworking with regard to the subject because there are all kinds of issues, such as digital rights and so forth, that affect and cross-pollinate each other in this discussion. That's what I'm worried about.

The Chair: Ms. Lambropoulos.

Ms. Emmanuela Lambropoulos: I was just going to say that my colleague put forward three motions at the last meeting, and the other one does touch a lot on what Ms. Rempel Garner was talking about, so maybe a combination of this motion and his motion on affordability.... I know there was talk of adding accessibility, which I think members on this side would be happy to incorporate.

The Chair: Now we have Mr. Patzer.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: To add to what my colleague was talking about, we have a real opportunity in front of us to be proactive when we're talking about the digital rights of Canadians. As 5G rolls out here...we're still a few years away from full deployment of it. I think we're looking at about a five-year window for that. We need to be in front of this because if we become reactive to it and not proactive, Canadians are going to be at a massive disadvantage. We have a great opportunity in front of us as a committee to own the conversation and the narrative around digital rights for Canadians, and I think we need to be proactive as we pursue this.

The Chair: Any other comments?

Mr. Erskine-Smith.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: When we think about digital rights, we can think of it in the context of data protection and privacy. When we think of digital rights, we can also think of it through

the idea of access at an affordable price, be it a wireless device or a wireless network.

When I was going through it, I think there was a motion on the review of the price and affordability of mobile telecommunication services in Canada. There was one on the regulations of telecommunications, and the Telecommunications Act itself, which would obviously play in there too. We have one from Michelle on the spectrum allocation process, which should be a part of any conversation about affordability and pricing. We also have a couple of motions related to the expansion of the 5G network, which is obviously part of the picture as well.

When we talk about digital rights, I don't necessarily see a lot of overlap between policies on pricing and policies on data protection per se. If we want to collapse them all together, I'm open to having that conversation. I would also be perfectly open to an expansive conversation about the price and affordability of mobile telecommunication services, including a review of legislation, the expansion of 5G, the spectrum allocation process and adding competitors to the market.

As for second and larger piece on data protection and privacy, in the last Parliament I was part of the ETHI committee and worked with Peter Kent, Bob Zimmer and Charlie Angus, and colleagues from our side as well, in putting recommendations forward on privacy and data protection. We did speak to article 20 of the GDPR in respect of data portability, but we didn't get into the idea of data trusts and data collectives in a serious way. I think that would be a very interesting area of conversation going forward as well.

It would be useful to think about pricing and data protection as two big pieces of digital rights that we should address. I don't know that we need to blend them together exactly.

• (1150)

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lemire, you have the floor.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Whether we amalgamate them or not, my concern is that we do a study that really depicts the current situation. I don't mind that we're pioneers, that we're looking into the future in terms of 5G technology or whatever, but I think the current situation is important, particularly in a regional or rural context. I think that's absolutely essential. I think accessibility means having access to a connection, whether it's the Internet or a cellular network.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Ehsassi.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: I suppose the challenge before this committee is to make sure that there's overlap and coherence amongst all the various issues that the committee members want to examine. It would appear to me that the issues that fit in nicely with each other would be affordability, which is the subject matter of a motion tabled by the member we're talking about; access, which is something that's been brought up; and perhaps spectrum, which is an issue of interest to Ms. Rempel. That would be one way of addressing it.

The other issue that I wanted to bring to the attention of the committee is that Ms. Rempel also has a motion on the data leak of sensitive information, so whether she would consider actually—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Chair, I would remind my colleague of the rule. I believe he's breaching privilege.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: I'm sorry.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: It's my motion and it can't be discussed publicly unless it's moved, I believe—but I'm rusty. I would just caution members when we're discussing motions that have been tabled but have not been made public—because this meeting is not in camera specifically—to not discuss other members' motions.

Thank you.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Sure. My apologies. It's an oversight on my part.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: It's okay, we're—

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: But in terms of bringing together the issues that are of concern to everyone here, it would appear to me that affordability, spectrum and access would go nicely together.

The Chair: Okay.

So we have a current motion on the floor and discussion about adjusting.... We do not have an amendment to the original motion that is before the committee.

Yes.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I have a point of clarification, Chair.

If we vote this motion down but then move another motion, I'm not clear how to do this technically. If we vote it down, is something else out of order? We could just vote this down and start something new. That's the correct way to do this. I'm not sure this is amendable. I think we probably need to have a discussion about crafting a motion that gets to the point that we're talking about here.

• (1155)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: To that end, it probably makes sense to move in camera and hash out the exact text. I don't think we're going to disagree in the end. We have a number of motions that are similar. I say we should go in camera and hash it out and get it done.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: That's fine.

The Chair: Is it the will of the committee to move in camera for further discussion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: So we will suspend for a few moments while we do the technical work.

Thank you.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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