



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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# Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 005**

Tuesday, February 25, 2020

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Chair: Mrs. Sherry Romanado





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• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.)):** I will call to order meeting number five of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

The purpose of today's meeting is to discuss some committee business. We have circulated a calendar of business to all members, which you have in front of you. Our purpose today is to go over some business items we have, including some scheduling of upcoming meetings.

As you can see, Thursday's meeting is allocated to the supplementary estimates (B). We will have Minister Joly joining us on Thursday for the supplementary estimates (B). There was a request for Minister Bains to present as well. Unfortunately, he's not available on Thursday. He has offered up an availability on March 12, if I'm correct, which is a Thursday.

On that note, I want to verify if it is the will of the committee to have Minister Bains present on, I believe, March 12. I'll just check with my colleague Mr. Ehsassi.

Is that correct?

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.):** As I understand it, Madam Chair, there is talk now of actually tabling the main estimates. Should it be the will of the committee, I think it would make more sense for us to revert to our original schedule, which was to do Mr. Masse's study on the 10th and 12th of March, and then, once the mains have been tabled, to actually invite the minister and his top officials.

**The Chair:** I will open up that proposal.

Are there any comments or questions from the members of the committee in regard to having Minister Bains not present on the supplementary estimates on March 12? Rather, we would wait until the main estimates have been tabled and then invite Minister Bains to appear to discuss the main estimates.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** What would we be doing on Thursday?

**The Chair:** This Thursday, the 27th, we have supplementary estimates (B), but with Minister Joly.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Okay.

**The Chair:** You had asked for two ministers.

Is that acceptable?

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** That works.

**The Chair:** Perfect.

As you know, we have a riding week the following week.

Upon our return, the plan is to have the short study that was proposed by Mr. Masse and accepted by the committee with respect to fraudulent calls and scammers. The goal is to have those two meetings in that week allocated for that study. Because it is a shorter study, we can make sure that we line up witnesses and so on. I'm just going to check with the clerk to verify timelines for witnesses and so on.

Mr. Masse, do you have a comment?

• (1110)

**Mr. Brian Masse:** I don't know if there's time after that, if we need any time, if we have any recommendations or anything along that line. I have some witnesses to submit as well, but I'll just throw that out there. I don't want it to interfere with other committee business.

**The Chair:** When would it be best for you to receive the witness list and suggested timeline? Would it be best perhaps before the end of this week so that you have some time to work on it?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael MacPherson):** Yes. That would be great.

**The Chair:** Would Friday at 9 a.m. work for everybody to submit names of witnesses to the clerk? Is that acceptable?

Perfect. I'll ask that you please submit your names of witnesses for that study to the clerk by 9 a.m. this Friday, the 28th of February. That will give the clerk time to line up folks.

Mr. Masse.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Not to be too particular, but can we make it Friday at 10? That's just because I know that staff come in at 9 a.m., and if somebody was late or if there was a problem.... I know that it's a particular thing. It's more related to just the extra hour in case somebody needs it for the first order of business.

**The Chair:** I'm fine with that. Is everyone fine with that?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Just don't mention to my staff that people come in only at 9.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Well, my one staff, she has to get the kids to child care—

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

**Mr. Brian Masse:** —so she comes in at 9:10. If we had a hiccup, then....

**The Chair:** It's not a problem.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** She's here well after her hours, that's for sure.

**The Chair:** We'll say 10 a.m. on Friday?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** That would be awesome. Thank you. I appreciate it.

**The Chair:** As you know, we adopted a motion for an additional study following that one. We're just waiting for draft copies of the press release we wanted to issue with respect to that study, which will help us in terms of announcing the study as well as lining up witnesses, submissions of written briefs and so on. We're waiting for some copies to be circulated for the committee's consideration.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** I'm sorry to be a pain this morning.

How much time will our researchers and analysts need for a small, short summary of the fraud study?

I wonder whether we are able to get a consolidated report on that, and perhaps if we do have any recommendations, I wonder whether we need a half meeting or something small to deal with that.

I would just like to see something come out of what we do on that, so that it could be distributed to the public. I was hoping our analysts might be able at least to compress a small report. Knowing the background of that, I would consider it quite valuable.

**Mr. Francis Lord (Committee Researcher):** That's what I understood, that there would be a report regarding the fraudulent calls study.

Given the timing with the other study on which you wanted to have a report, you'd start to review your report in June. I'm sure the chair is going to discuss it, but you would probably need to dedicate the April meetings to the telecommunications study. Once you're done with those hearings, you would be ready to review the report on fraudulent calls. I think this should fit together nicely.

Given that it's going to be two meetings at the most, it should be a short report. I think you're going to be able to wrap all of this up in May.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** That's perfect. Thank you.

**The Chair:** You have in front of you the press release. Perhaps you'd like to have a moment to review it and we'll open up the floor for comments and questions. We'll also just go over the schedule in terms of sliding in when this study will happen.

Ms. Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Do you need a motion to approve it?

**The Chair:** I'd like people to have a chance to read it, and then perhaps we could have a motion to approve.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Sure. That's good.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Erskine-Smith.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** One small change I would say is to launch a new study on the affordability and accessibility of telecommunications in Canada, and

then examine several aspects, including the 5G expansion, and not include accessibility and affordability there as a subtopic but make it the overarching topic.

The second thing I would say is that March 20, 2020, is an unnecessarily short period of time in which to submit a brief, if this study is to extend well beyond March 20. I expect us to have witnesses attending before us leading into April, so I don't know why we would set such an early deadline for briefs. I don't know what the deadline should be, but even the end of April would be fine by me, because I don't expect us to wrap this up in a short period of time.

Last, it would be helpful if the analysts could provide us with a list of proposed witnesses by Friday, March 6. We could then discuss that the following week and hammer out at least a preliminary set of witnesses we would invite. It would be helpful to have two smart people thinking about it before I think about it.

• (1115)

**The Chair:** My apologies. Your proposal is to have them further....

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** I suggested, just randomly, the end of April, because that seems a lot of time and I think we'll still be dealing with it at that point. However, I'm open to suggestions.

**The Chair:** I want to clarify that the reason we made the deadline a little shorter than when the actual witnesses would be here is to give a chance for the analysts to actually collect all the submissions, make sure they're in both official languages, and so on, because we have such a short, compressed calendar, and to make sure that we finish in time for a June submission.

The thought was that we would make sure we have the written briefs before we actually start seeing all the witnesses, but if it's the will of the committee to make that a little later, it's the will of the committee.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** How about no deadline? I just don't see the rush in setting a deadline. I don't think we'll get a lot of people submitting briefs by March 20 if we send this out now. I would prefer that individuals and organizations have more of an opportunity to submit something. We can also invite those who we want as witnesses.

It's not the biggest deal for me, but I would think a later date makes a bit more sense. We're not going to start this study until March 24. I don't think we need all the briefs in before we even start it.

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Maybe as a way to make sure that the analysts have time to do work, in future committee business, once we've done four or five meetings on this, we can take half an hour and determine who else we need to hear from.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Sure.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** That's just so the analysts have some direction on where we're going so it's not just a big rush at the end, and that's fine with me.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Would some time earlier in April or mid-April be sufficient timing, or was March 20 set for a particular...?

**The Chair:** I will ask the analyst, who would be the one who is dealing with their work.

**Ms. Sarah Lemelin-Bellerose (Committee Researcher):** No. If it's earlier in mid-April, it would be fine. It's just that in past studies, it would often happen that we would get the deadline on the last day of the study when we started drafting the report—

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Yes, of course.

**Ms. Sarah Lemelin-Bellerose:** —and then it is a lot. Everything always arrives on almost the last day of the deadline.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** In that case, why don't we say something like April 9? That gives some more time, and I don't think would get in the way. I do things last minute, too, so it makes sense to set an earlier date than the end of our study.

**The Chair:** Are there any other comments with respect to the press release?

[*Translation*]

Are there any comments about the amendment to change the deadline for submissions to April 9?

[*English*]

I will ask for a motion to adopt the press release.

Madam Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Sure, with the proposed change, I so move.

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

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** When is that going to go out? Will you send a notice to the committee?

**The Chair:** This will be sent out in the next few days, and the notice will be sent out, so that way members can share this among their networks to make sure it gets as much coverage as possible, especially with respect to witnesses, lining them up and so on.

You also have in front of you another press release with respect to the study we will be conducting on March 10 and 12, so we're a little bit backwards here.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I don't think we have that one.

**The Chair:** You don't have that one? We will circulate that.

While that is being circulated, I want to verify with the committee if a briefing from the analysts in advance of our next study would be appropriate. Obviously, a written brief can be prepared, and I believe we were looking at that.

• (1120)

**Mr. Francis Lord:** We'll have time to prepare a background paper on the telecom study and not so much time for the fraud calls, but we'll be providing briefing notes before both meetings, and you're going to have some background information on that.

**The Chair:** There are some members of the committee who are much more versed on the dossier than others, so we want to make

sure everyone has an opportunity to be briefed prior to the commencement of witnesses.

My apologies, they are going to be circulating copies momentarily. What I can do in the interim is read it. It's very short. In English:

The Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology (the Committee) adopted a motion to study the influx of fraud calls in Canada, including robo-calls, ghost calls, and spam calls. The Committee will also examine the successes and failures of the National Do-Not-Call List, and outline the STIR/SHAKEN measures that will be implemented on in September 2020.

You can also support the work of the Committee by submitting a brief. Briefs must not exceed 1,000 words and must be sent not later than 13 March 2020 to: [indu@parl.gc.ca](mailto:indu@parl.gc.ca).

For more information about this study, please consult INDU's website.

That essentially invites folks.

Mr. Masse, I'm going to ask for your thoughts regarding March 13. Given that we're going to have March 10 and 12, would March 13 be adequate so that we can make sure all submissions are in?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** It sounds fine to me. I would defer to the analysts. They are the ones who get the bulk of the action here that needs to be—

**Mr. Francis Lord:** Thank you, Mr. Masse.

In this case we will have plenty of time, so receiving briefs for March 13 is perfectly doable.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** That sounds good.

**The Chair:** Perfect.

Are we in agreement, or would you like to wait to receive the copy? It's going to be circulated momentarily. I will wait until you have a copy in front of you and then I will ask for a motion to approve the press release.

There is a little grammar and editing that needs to be done on them, but if I could have someone move—

Mr. Masse.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** I'll move it, with authorization to fix grammar and typos.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Dreeshen.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC):** I'm curious about the wording. The two different versions we have sound a lot different. It says, "You can also support the work of the Committee by submitting a brief" and it explains that. In the other one we just did, the wording is different.

Are we going to be consistent? It's not a big deal, but one is a little more folksy than the other one. One says that you can also support this work by submitting a brief, and the other one says, "To support this work, the Committee asks Canadians to submit a brief."

I don't care. On the next one, we might have a different story about how it is. Are we going to be—

**Mr. Francis Lord:** Do you prefer the folksy version or the more formal one?

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** I don't care. I just note that they are different.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** The first one seemed logical. We were talking to having Canadians submit a brief. The other is a little less so.

**Mr. Francis Lord:** Okay.

• (1125)

**The Chair:** In terms of professionalism, perhaps the first one....

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** I think the wording on the first one is a bit more professional than the other.

**The Chair:** Ms. Lambropoulos.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Let's finish with this one first, and then I will say what I have to say after.

**The Chair:** Do I have a motion to approve the press release, with the amendment, using the same language as the previous press release?

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

Madam Lambropoulos.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** I know we already approved this one, but for the short version of the previous press release, would we be able to include that the committee “launches as a new study on telecommunications accessibility and affordability” in the short version, just so people know that's what we're focusing on in the study?

I think Nathaniel switched the wording in the long version. Would we be able to make it reflect that in the short version as well?

**The Chair:** Because we have already voted on this, it would require unanimous consent to go back.

Do we have approval of the committee to go back to the first press release we just approved to add “accessibility and affordability”?

Is that correct in the short version?

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Do I have approval of the committee?

Monsieur Lemire.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** I think the idea was to make the sentence flow better.

Ultimately, I'm not opposed to it.

[*English*]

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

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** I think they were already reflected in the long version, so I think it's fine.

**The Chair:** Just to explain, the short version is literally what would go out on Twitter and social media. If there are enough characters to include “affordability and accessibility” and if it's the will of the committee, we can do that.

Thank you very much.

With respect to the telecom study—not the fraud study, but the telecom study—we are going to have a written brief, or a backgrounder. Would the committee be interested in having a briefing from the department?

Thank you.

We will see if we can line that up for March 24 before we see witnesses.

Mr. Erskine Smith.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** The only other thing would be this. I had asked the analysts if we could get a list of proposed witnesses for March 6, I think, and we want to make sure that we set some time aside on March 10 or March 12 to discuss witnesses or that we have a subcommittee meeting to do so.

Again, March 24 will come up on us pretty quickly, and if we don't have witnesses lined up, we should make sure there's some timeline advice so that we have a deadline for witnesses on that front, too.

**The Chair:** Your suggestion is to use some time on March 10 or March 12, or would you prefer—

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Or just now set a deadline to get our witness list, say, post March 6. Get witnesses in for at least a preliminary—it doesn't have to be a final—cut-off, but at least we have witnesses that we're proposing because we have a calendar to build out by, say, March 11 or March 12.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Madam Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I like that.

Maybe what we could do, because we're starting on March 24, is have maybe half an hour at the end of the meeting on May 5—it doesn't have to be a hard date, but somewhere within the first week of May—where we can regroup after a few meetings to consider whether we need more witnesses and that sort of stuff. Maybe we could do a soft list with the understanding that there might be a desire to invite more down the road.

Also, I'd ask whether we need to talk about a formal travel submission today because that will inform this as well.

**The Chair:** I just want to double-check. We had allocated eight meetings towards this study, so that brings us to May 5—

• (1130)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Okay, sorry, I didn't count properly.

**The Chair:** —if we are starting back on March 24.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** It's fine.

What was being proposed for the witness deadline?

**The Chair:** We have a proposal from Mr. Erskine-Smith.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** I said an initial soft deadline.

I was thinking that if the analysts got us a proposed list of witnesses for March 6, then some time the following week we could have a deadline where we come back with the witnesses who we want to prioritize.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Sure, okay.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Then we could revisit it at the end of April or whatever the case may be.

**The Chair:** Mr. Erskine-Smith, your proposal is to have a preliminary list of witnesses submitted to the clerk on March 6.

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** No. The analysts, using their research, would get us a list of witnesses who would be relevant to this committee. We would then have a few days to look it over, and maybe by March 12 we would have a proposed list of witnesses that we would submit. There's no magic to it. March 10, March 11, March 12.... I don't really have a strong view on it. It's not going to take too long, I don't think, to identify the key ones from the analysts' list.

**The Chair:** Is that acceptable?

The goal is that we receive some time at the end of the week of March 3—

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** Yes.

**The Chair:** —a potential list of witnesses from the analysts for review the week of March 10, with a deadline of Friday, March 13, for members of the committee to submit to the clerk formal lists of witnesses who they would like invite to those meetings starting March 24. Is that correct?

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith:** If that's sufficient time to get everyone in place, then yes, I think that would be a good schedule.

**The Chair:** Is that acceptable to the committee?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner, you had a question with respect to the draft letter of intent for travel and the corresponding budget.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Is there anything that you need from us today, or when do we need to revisit that again?

**The Chair:** I'll turn to the clerk.

**The Clerk:** Basically, the committee already agreed to submit a preliminary travel request. If there was intention of changing the locations or the destinations, you could revisit it today, but other than that, no, there's nothing to do at this time.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Then I guess the next step would be that if there was preliminary interest, it would come back to us through the liaison subcommittee, and then we'd need to talk about it.

**The Clerk:** Exactly. The liaison subcommittee would invite us to submit a fully budgeted proposal.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Do we have a sense of when that letter of intent to travel will be prepared?

**The Clerk:** Yes, it's—

**The Chair:** I know that it has been a little bit rock and roll.

**The Clerk:** It's not us. The liaison committee has yet to be formed. It still has to form, and then it has to create its subcommittee. Once it exists—

**The Chair:** We'll have time.

**The Clerk:** —it will be....

**The Chair:** Okay. Perfect.

With that, I open the floor for any other business that members would like to bring forward. I'll verify with the analyst or the clerk if there's anything else that you need.

**Mr. Francis Lord:** There may be one thing.

**The Chair:** Yes, certainly.

**Mr. Francis Lord:** I just want to be clear, again, about expectations regarding the telecom study, because there was mention of May 5, to see if there should be additional witnesses.

In order for us to give you a report that is translated into both official languages by the end of May, so that you can review starting in June and hopefully table before the summer, we're really working with the eight meetings that you've assigned for this, and then immediately after that we need to start drafting.

I'm sorry, but that's the support we can offer you for that. I wish we could do more, but I think realistically that's what we can offer.

**The Chair:** Are there any further comments or questions?

Madam Lambropoulos.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** I thought the point of early submissions by witnesses, or by people who wanted to just submit briefs, was so that it can start earlier and so that we can potentially add whatever we find out in our travel and whatever we wanted to add to the study later on in May.

Was that not a possibility? Would we not be able to add to whatever it is that we studied before, or recommendations or whatever?

• (1135)

**The Chair:** There are sort of three parts that go into the study. One part is written submissions. The second part is witness testimony, which we're hoping will go over the course of the eight meetings starting March 24 and ending at the end of April. If we are allowed to travel, there will also be what we hear when we travel, if authorized. All three of those parts will form part of the report.

On the idea of travelling, the thoughts were that it would be possibly in May because we'll have finished hearing the witness testimony. Then, during that time, the written submissions have been done, so while we're travelling that can also be done. It was all working in parallel, but again, this can be revisited. In order to make the deadline of submitting a report and tabling that in June, we are stuck on this very tight timeline.

I'm not sure if that's clear.

Are there any further questions or comments?

Seeing that there's no other business before the committee, could I have a motion to adjourn?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** I so move.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.

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