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Chair: Mr. Vance Badawey



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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. We have some committee business to deal with here, but I want to preface any comments by extending an apology.

Today I attended the international trade committee, and in my zest to get to further work on our agenda, I mentioned some of the things that were passed at our subcommittee that we're bringing to committee today. We're going to be discussing these today, but I just didn't feel right that I mentioned them there before you folks had a chance to see what came out of the subcommittee. I want to extend an apology for that.

The intent was to start the process of working cross-committee with other committees that I'm sure these motions are going to touch and trying to get those yardsticks on the field sooner rather than later. Once again, I do apologize for that.

That said, I also want to take the opportunity to invite the analysts to come forward and formally introduce themselves. They can give us somewhat of a rundown on how important they in fact are as we move forward.

I'll pass it over to you. Welcome.

Ms. Geneviève Gosselin (Committee Researcher): Hello, everybody. My name is Geneviève Gosselin. With me is my colleague Daniel Farrelly. We are the analysts for the TRAN committee.

I've been working with TRAN for a bit over two years now. We've done a lot. Two years in TRAN is like five years at other committees.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Geneviève Gosselin: I want to talk briefly about what analysts do for committees, especially since we have a couple of new MPs here.

We have given you a very fancy binder. We have it in English and French. I think we distributed it according to your first language, but you can come to me if you want another version. That's just to give you an idea of what we do. In the binder, we've listed the products and services for parliamentary committees.

Briefly, what we do for every meeting when we have witnesses for a study is to make a briefing note. Briefing notes provide context for the study, with maybe a brief description of the witnesses and suggested questions. All of the briefing notes are sent 24 hours

in advance in both official languages. Everybody receives these at the same time. We also write the draft reports, which are also sent a couple of days in advance. What's very important is that everything we do is based on facts. Reports are based on evidence—solely. We are non-partisan, which is the most important thing to remember.

If the committee requests it, we can give you a list of potential witnesses. We also write plans for reports or a plan for a study if time allows, which it often doesn't. Also, as a lot of you know, for your own office, we also answer requests. Many of you have already used our services. That service for you is for your office only; it is confidential. If you ever have a request about transportation or infrastructure, you can always come to see us, either by calling us or sending an email. I've left you with my personal business card and the library's card. If it's for a request about anything other than transportation—health, immigration or anything—you have the library's generic number and email, which you can always send.

[Translation]

Next, we prepare publications. I put a few examples in the binder. First, we have what we call Hill notes. They are short publications. I went to the trouble of including one I did about the Hyperloop project. All publications have to have a connection to Parliament. We also put out lengthy publications, such as the one on self-driving vehicles. We prepare legislative summaries of bills, as well. Whenever we release a publication, a copy is sent to you. Publications are available to the public, but they will also be available in the digital binder.

In addition, we prepare research papers. They aren't public, but they are sent to all committee members. We recently put together one on the aircraft certification process. If it's not already in the digital binder, it will be soon. All committee members have access to those documents. There are already quite a few, with more coming in the days ahead. As for reports, we'll talk about those when the time comes.

If you have any questions for us, you can drop by or give us a call. We are always available.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any questions?

As there are no questions, we'll move on.

Members of the committee have received the report of the subcommittee with respect to the motions that were brought forward by all parties. These are now being recommended by the subcommittee to all of you.

I'll go through the motions and ask the members who had brought those motions forward to speak on them and see if there are any questions from the floor, as well as any comments.

With that, we're going to start with the first one. We have a motion brought forward here by the NDP.

Mr. Bachrach, did you want to make any comment on that?

• (1540)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't think there's any major comment to be made other than just noting the amendments that we made at the subcommittee. There was some discussion about adding item (d) and I believe some words were removed, as well. For the most part, I think it speaks for itself.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

Are there any further questions or comments?

Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): The following was brought to my attention just prior to this meeting, and I think it would be a good amendment if the committee agrees to it. It follows the recommendation that whenever a minister appears before the committee, every effort be made to ensure that the meeting is televised. We agreed to that. To the next recommendation—"That all requests to appear before the committee be distributed to the committee members"—I move that we add that "all briefing materials submitted to the clerk be distributed to the committee members".

I'm not saying this is common practice, but we've found in the past that perhaps the government side has received the briefing documents prior to the rest of the committee getting those documents, so we would add that all briefing materials submitted to the clerk also be distributed to the committee members.

The Chair: We're actually looking at the second motion.

Mr. Todd Doherty: It's the third.

The Chair: Mr. Doherty, if I could just go back to the first motion, which is Mr. Bachrach's motion. Are there any questions or comments on that? I see none.

With respect to the minister appearing, are there any questions or comments on that? We are receiving confirmation that both ministers will, in fact, be appearing next Thursday. As I mentioned at the last meeting, there is the meeting with the department on Tuesday if we start the Max 8 discussions.

With that, we'll now move on to Mr. Doherty's amendment.

Madam Clerk, would you to read the amendment?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Caroline Bosc): The amendment would be, "and that all briefing materials submitted to the clerk be distributed to the committee members."

The Chair: Are there any questions or comments on that amendment? I see none.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Doherty, do you want to talk about the next motion?

Mr. Todd Doherty: This motion was first tabled in the dying days of the last session:

That, the committee undertake a study of four meetings in regard to Transport Canada's aircraft certification process, including, but not limited to, the nature of Transport Canada's relationship to the Federal Aviation Administration and other certifying bodies, as well as the role of airplane manufacturers in the certification process.

This is top of mind. We know that the families and Canadians all across our country are very cognizant that possible recertification in July of the 737 Max is fast approaching. They want to ensure that we parliamentarians are doing our job in checking how this certification is going with the officials. They want to make sure that we're not just relying on the FAA, which was a rubber stamp and one of the previous issues.

The Chair: Are there any questions or comments on that motion?

Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): First of all, I'd like to say that I was really impressed to read the report by the subcommittee. It looks like it was a collaborative exercise. Overall, I think that's the spirit we want to continue in.

In relation to this specific motion, I wanted to check.... It's kind of a technical question. We did receive the library research paper on the certification process for commercial aircraft in Canada. In that paper, they refer to Transport Canada Civil Aviation. Mr. Doherty, is that exactly what you mean by Federal Aviation Administration?

Mr. Todd Doherty: If I may, Mr. Chair, the Federal Aviation Administration is the U.S. counterpart to Transport Canada.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I see. Okay.

• (1545)

Mr. Todd Doherty: The FAA works with the aircraft manufacturers to recertify that aircraft. It's been the natural course for Transport Canada, in our close relationship with our U.S. counterparts, that once the FAA signs off on something, Transport Canada follows suit.

In relation to the 737 Max issue, there are reports that we, meaning Transport Canada, essentially rubber-stamped it. The FAA said it was okay and they rubber-stamped it. That's what the question is. We want to bring the officials here to find out if we're going to make any changes in our recertification process.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you for that clarification.

The Chair: Are there other questions or comments from members of the committee?

Okay. We'll move on.

The next motion, once again, is the motion by...

Mr. Berthold, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): I'd like you to clarify something, please. The motions are being put forward, but we aren't adopting them. Is that right?

[*English*]

The Chair: I was simply going to do them in a block. Do you want to do them individually?

Mr. Luc Berthold: I think it's better.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Bachrach, do you want to move your motion?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, I'd be happy to move it.

Do you want me to read the entire text?

The Chair: That's not required.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Okay.

The first motion starts with "That any motion to go in camera" and ends with "(d) for any other reason, with the unanimous consent of the committee."

It's a little hard to distinguish between the three separate ones there.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I will move the first one.

The Chair: Are there any further questions?

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

The Chair: We'll move on to the next one.

Mr. Berthold's motion has to do with the minister—

A voice: No, they are still Mr. Bachrach's.

The Chair: Oh, I'm sorry. They're Mr. Bachrach's.

Go ahead.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: My apologies. I probably could have moved all of them together.

I will move the following:

That whenever a Minister appears before the Committee, every effort be made to ensure that the meeting is televised.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

All those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one is as amended.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I might need to get the final wording.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, would you read out the motion, please?

The Clerk: It states:

That all requests to appear before the Committee be distributed to the Committee members and that all briefing materials submitted to the clerk be distributed to the Committee members.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: That's fine.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any further questions?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: The next one is from Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I move the following:

That, the Committee undertake a study of four meetings in regard to Transport Canada's aircraft certification process, including, but not limited to, the nature of Transport Canada's relationship to the Federal Aviation Administration and other certifying bodies, as well as the role of airplane manufacturers in the certification process.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Doherty.

Are there any further questions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next motion is from Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I move:

That, pursuant to 108(2), the Committee invite the Minister of Transport to appear on the subject of his mandate letter, and that this meeting take place by February 27, 2020.

I know you've already received a reply from the minister on that.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Are there any questions or comments on that?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I move:

That, pursuant to 108(2), the Committee invite the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities to appear on the subject of her mandate letter, and that this meeting take place by February 27, 2020.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there questions or comments?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Monsieur Barsalou-Duval.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): I move:

That the Committee undertake a study on the risks of centralizing rail traffic control in Canada and the consequences of relocating CN rail traffic controllers in Montreal to Edmonton.

The motion speaks for itself. By way of context, I'll add that CN recently announced that it was relocating its rail traffic control centre from Montreal to Alberta. We have concerns about rail safety. For many reasons, we talk about official languages, but it's also important to have a single rail traffic control centre for all of Canada. I find this worrisome, and I want the committee to have an opportunity to look into the matter. It fits into a broader context, since CP did the same thing a while ago, opting to consolidate all of its control centres into one.

• (1550)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

With that, are there any questions or comments?

Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I move that the motion be amended to indicate that the committee undertake a study of at least two meetings, rather than two meetings. That way, if other rail safety issues come up during the first two meetings, we won't be limited to two meetings.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Naturally, I support the amendment.

[English]

The Chair: Does everybody have a handle on the amendment?

Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): As amended, I guess, yes.

I have no particular issue with that suggestion. This is something that I'm not very familiar with and many of the committee members probably aren't very familiar with, so I'd suggest, yes, maybe you want to insert "a minimum of two".

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, is that fine?

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I would agree with that. As I mentioned yesterday with respect to this issue, with the 10 deaths in the last 20 months and the CN rail strike over the safety issues, I think this is a topic that could go beyond two meetings. I think we agreed at that time that from the first meeting we would probably have more questions that could go from there, so I have no problem with this.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any further questions or comments on the amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

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

The Chair: Thank you.

Churence, Mr. Rogers, you're up.

Mr. Churence Rogers: This motion reads:

That the Committee commit to undertake a study focusing on current and anticipated labour shortages in the Canadian transportation sector, for example truck drivers, mariners, maintenance staff, trainers/instructors and various types of engineers and technicians in the aviation sector. The study would identify the implications of such shortages and look at possible solutions to alleviate problems stemming from them; and that, in consultation with the Committee Members, the Chair be empowered to coordinate the resources and scheduling necessary to execute these studies in six (6) meetings or fewer.

I want to add one comment, Mr. Chair. I met this morning with the gentlemen from the Canadian Ferry Association, which is of course extremely important in B.C., Atlantic Canada and some other parts of the country. They were telling me that they have major shortages on the horizon because of people who are retiring in the next few years. They have a major challenge on their hands. That's another example of an area in the transportation sector that we really need to take a good look at to see where the biggest challenges are. That's what this resolution is trying to accomplish.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rogers.

Any questions or comments?

I have Mr. Doherty and Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Again, I will offer my comments on this, having been in the aviation and transportation industry for over 22 years. While the motion itself is very broad, it is a very important and, I thought, very smart motion, as I said to Churence, though I said I probably wouldn't say it publicly.

I spoke at a conference in Berkeley a number of years ago, and at that time we had road, rail, marine and air industry executives there who were all talking about our challenges, even to the point where the American Trucking Associations was going to colleges and universities trying to entice college and university grads to become truck drivers. We're seeing the same void here in Canada. There are other incidents. We have a massive air carrier, one of our largest in the country, looking at recruiting pilots with as few as 70 hours' training and then taking them and training them themselves because there's such a pilot shortage. I believe it would be very prudent to study this, but I would recommend the following. It was a comment that was made yesterday. On one day we study trucking transport, on the next day we study aviation and marine and rail; and perhaps out of that, we may have future meetings or may need a future meeting for another sector, or what have you, or for further questions.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Yes, it's definitely an important motion, especially in Brampton. Transportation, especially the trucking industry, is huge, and it has a huge shortage as well.

I come from a transportation background. I'm a customs broker by trade, so I have dealt with all modes of transportation whether it's trucking or ocean or marine, and there's a huge shortage.

I don't think we need to restrict ourselves to just six meetings or fewer. We don't know what the study might turn into. I think we need at least six meetings. It could go more because this is very important to many ridings across Canada, and we might need to look at it in more depth. I don't know if we want to limit ourselves.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I think it's in the committee's purview to be able to make that decision as we go as well.

The Chair: We have Mr. Bachrach, and then I'm going to Mr. El-Khoury.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree this is an important issue and certainly relevant to the riding I represent and worthy of study.

My concern is that if we add up all of the meetings from the motions that have been brought before us, a total of 42 meetings have been proposed. From the conversation so far, it seems that we are adding, not subtracting. That would take us through to November without any room for estimates or legislation, which, of course, are going to require us to focus elsewhere.

As important as these issues are, my thought is that we should consider how many meetings we want to spend on each topic, because other issues are going to arise that require the committee's time, and spending eight meetings talking about this one issue, while it's important, is going to come at the cost of dealing with the other issues.

We could maybe talk about prioritization. We could look at these motions and simply not move forward with some of them. Certainly, some I think are a higher priority than others or we could have a more focused approach, which would mean that we would be able to deal with more topics as a committee.

Perhaps slightly contrary to my friend, Mr. Rogers, I was going to propose that we limit it to four meetings as opposed to six.

The Chair: Mr. El-Khoury, Mr. Rogers, and then Mr. Davidson.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This motion is very important to me. In Quebec, where I'm from, we have a labour shortage.

If workers with the skills to do the job are available, can they be brought in from elsewhere? Do we need the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to step in?

In my riding, three truck drivers are facing deportation. They've been working here for 10 to 15 years. They're married and their children are Quebecers, but because their political refugee claims weren't filed as prescribed, they're on the verge of having to leave.

Can anything be done to prevent their deportation and keep them here? After all, these are people who have been here for 10 to 15 years, and Quebec is in need of tradespeople to drive its economy.

I submit that for the committee's consideration.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Rogers, and then Mr. Davidson.

Mr. Churence Rogers: For the benefit of the entire committee, when I introduced these motions at subcommittee I said these could be a part of the major work plan of this entire committee for the next several weeks and months. However, I did suggest that the subcommittee would further study them with the committee members and decide which ones we wanted to focus on, first, second, third.

I think it's incumbent upon this committee to work as a group to prioritize each of the pieces of the work plan. We recommended these resolutions. The number of meetings has to be a concern. I agree.

The depth of the study, and how many meetings we do, and all of those kinds of things we could try to co-operate and work together on in the subcommittee and in committee to decide what's most important, and which should go first. The other members of the committee may very well bring forward other resolutions that we have to consider because they are important topics that impact your part of the country or your riding.

I'm open to having these prioritized and having members make suggestions about whether we need four meetings or six meetings or what we can do.

I want to offer that, Mr. Chair.

• (1600)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Davidson.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We have the Max 8 and then rail, both of which are transportation issues, and then employment, all of which are important issues.

I want to make sure that we don't get off track and cover all of transportation out of the gate and not at infrastructure. I know that my colleague sitting beside me, Michael Barrett, and I have ridings with a huge lack of Internet because of rural digital infrastructure gap in rural Canada. So I want to make sure that rural Canada is represented and that we definitely tackle that issue because it's affecting education and small business, especially in my riding of York—Simcoe.

The Chair: As we discussed at our last meeting, this is all up to the committee. What we're all trying to do here when bringing these motions forward is be as transparent as possible and throw everything on the table. Then it's up to the committee. The more we have on the table, the more we know and the more we can recognize what those priorities should be.

One of the challenges that we had during the last session on this committee was that things popped up over time—which is expected, granted. However, when they pop up, other things sometimes go on the back burner. We have an intention to move forward on something and we cue it up. Then, all of a sudden, something else comes up. I think the intent here is to get everything on the table. Granted, other things are going to pop up, but when we have all of the desires on the table, we, as a committee, can prioritize. Yes, those priorities might change, but that's up to you folks. That's all up to you.

That said, we can also look at how some of these might happen in four meetings, although we were planning on six meetings. Some might happen in more meetings, but, again, that's up to you. When we're putting these things together, we're going to want to expedite them—trust me. As the chair, I will say that if we can do it in four meetings, by all means we're going to do it in four meetings. That way we can free up some time for the next study we want to do.

Prioritization and queuing is up to you folks—that's my point—and then, as time goes on, the need for time or not.

Mr. Davidson.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Just quickly.... A pop-up issue that you'd be referring to, just for a simple example, would be the ongoing rail blockades, as we might want to look at how much they are costing the Canadian economy.

The Chair: That would be up to the committee.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Yes, it was just so I know. Thanks.

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach, go ahead.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I don't want to belabour the topic, but my opinion is that if in our motion we specify a smaller number of meetings, it's easier for us to increase that number than it is to decrease it. If we give the clerks and the chair direction that we want six meetings, I'm sure that all of these topics can be filled up with six meetings' worth of business. It seems like the problem that we're going to have is the opposite: It's going to be harder to limit things than it is going to be to fill our time. We have a really full agenda in front of us.

That's just my opinion. As you say, it's at the discretion of the committee—

The Chair: Exactly.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: —so if we get to the end of the allocated meetings and feel, as a group, that we're not done with that topic, we can vote to extend it.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I think it's going to be harder for us to go the other way.

The Chair: That's a great point. I think doing the math, we may want to say to the clerk, once, for example, the witnesses are tallied and we all put our witnesses in and agree on who they are going to be.... They get 10 minutes a pop. Do the math, and then, of course, allow time for us to ask questions. There may be an opportunity for the committee, once the witnesses are submitted and the clerk comes back, to say, “You know what? We may only need four

meetings,” or “We may need six meetings,” depending on how many witnesses we want to hear.

Is that fair enough? Is that a fair comment?

A voice: Yes. Good point.

The Chair: Mr. Doherty, put your phone down.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I'm texting about you actually.

Voices: Oh, oh!

• (1605)

The Chair: Are we okay with that?

Mr. Churence Rogers: Yes.

The Chair: Okay, then we'll move to the motion that Mr. Rogers has brought forward. Are there any further questions or comments on that motion?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Let the record say that I put my phone down.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Doherty.

A voice: Don't tell him who you were texting.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Yeah.

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Pursuant to my previous questions, are we still at six meetings for this topic? If so, I would propose an amendment that we set it at four meetings.

The Chair: Okay.

Are there any questions or comments on that?

Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Looking at the scope of the study, it looks pretty massive. If we want to go with four, as you said, and add a meeting later if we want, that's fine. I'm good with that amendment.

The Chair: Are there any further questions or comments?

Mr. Bittle.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): I think it's a massive study. Vance, Tony and I know there are a large number of seafarers living in the Niagara region. From speaking with them, I know it is a huge issue. I don't know if limiting the study on something this important, especially when there seems to be support from the other side that this is important, that it's fundamental.... I'm interested to see what the solutions are, and limiting it might not get us to where we need to be.

The Chair: Are there any further questions or comments?

Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I would say we need at least four.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there any further questions?

Mr. Davidson.

It's your guy.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Just in the spirit of things, I say we should split the difference. He's at four meetings and you're at six. Go with five and we're all happy. Carry on.

The Chair: Are you guys okay with that?

Mr. Churence Rogers: I'm good.

The Chair: You're good. Okay.

Are there any further questions?

Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: If we start discussing the number of meetings now, we're going to do it for every motion. When the time comes to talk about the study, and we have the witness lists and the issues to be addressed, figuring out how many meetings we need will be easier.

Mr. Chair, before the meeting, you told me that motions could be amended along the way. Therefore, I suggest that we not waste any more time trying to decide whether we need three or four meetings. When we're making decisions about the study, the subcommittee will meet. Everyone will be asked for their list of proposed witnesses, and it will be possible to figure out how many meetings are necessary. As a committee, we can decide at that point.

Will we need four, six, seven or 12 meetings? I have no idea how many witnesses we might come up with, so I wouldn't spend too much time today on how many meetings we'll need. The subcommittee can make any necessary adjustments when the time comes.

[English]

The Chair: It does say in the motion, "in 6 meetings or fewer".

Is everybody okay with that? We're not going to dig that deep into the weeds. We can just deal with that at the subcommittee. As I said earlier, a lot of it would depend on how many witnesses we bring forward. Do the math.

Is that fine?

Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I agree with the direction in which you're going, but for the purpose of clarity, can we simply take out the number of meetings from each of these motions and deal with that at the subcommittee once we have the number of witnesses in front of us?

Is that what's being suggested?

The Chair: Are there questions or comments on that?

Mr. Churence Rogers: That would be difficult for the clerk in terms of scheduling and trying to determine how many witnesses we could accommodate, if we don't suggest some type of parameters around the number of meetings.

The Chair: Madam Clerk.

Am I throwing you in the hot seat?

The Clerk: It's entirely at the discretion of the committee what they decide. I will make whatever the committee decides happen.

The Chair: I will leave it up to the committee.

Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I would suggest, for the sake of time, that we've all agreed around this table that it is going to be the purview of the committee. As needed, we can make amendments. It says six meetings or fewer, or four or fewer, or what have you. We can decide that along the way. We aren't being held at six meetings.

The Chair: That's fine.

Mr. Todd Doherty: We aren't being held at four meetings. Leave it as is.

We can go over and over this. Again, the clock is ticking. If we're trying to be a committee of action, let's just get going.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Davidson, you had a comment.

Mr. Scot Davidson: No, I was going to go with Mr. Doherty's suggestion.

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm having a bit of trouble following. Initially, it was six or fewer meetings. Then, four meetings were suggested. Then, it was four or more meetings. It was even suggested that we not indicate the number of meetings at all. Now, if I understand correctly, it's being suggested that we go back to six or fewer meetings.

I completely agree that the subcommittee will decide how many meetings to allocate to each study and at least propose a schedule based on priority. That's important, because it will make it a whole lot easier for us to see what is doable in the time we have once we have the full picture.

If, however, we go with the first option, in other words, six or fewer meetings, it will give the subcommittee some guidance. I do think that it could be helpful. We have to make a choice, but it might be a good idea to set the number of meetings to give us a general idea. We could also not set the number of meetings at all. I think choosing a number would give the subcommittee something to build on in terms of setting the priorities. It could be helpful.

I am nevertheless aware that there will be a desire around the table to deal with a certain number of issues. As such, if we go with four or more meetings, once the subcommittee starts prioritizing, we can come to a consensus and decide to hold eight meetings on a particular topic. At least, if we want to deal with a number of issues, with four or more meetings, we could have a discussion to determine whether that's enough to deal with all the issues we'd like to. Personally, I'm inclined to go with four meetings or more.

• (1610)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Davidson.

Mr. Scot Davidson: No, I think we're reading too much into this. We're just trying to build a calendar that we can see.

There is a great thing we could add: an asterisk with "subject to change". It's a great quote, "subject to change".

The Chair: Okay, so are you putting that forward?

Mr. Scot Davidson: I think you can have an asterisk with "subject to change".

The Chair: On all of them.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Yes, on all of them.

The Chair: Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Because I'm new, I have a technical question. Surely the request for witnesses is limited time-wise, is it not? When we start to study this, a notice goes out. Who are the witnesses going to be? We look at the list. It isn't an ongoing process, is it? Is it not a two-week process or timeline by which witnesses are decided on? I need to understand that. Surely we would know quite quickly how many witnesses we would have, and we could therefore plan at that time how many sessions we'd need. It's really a question for the clerk.

The Chair: Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: It's a chicken-and-egg situation. Either the list can be provided to us ahead of time and then we can try to organize how many meetings would be required, or we would determine ahead of time the number of meetings, and then you would provide witnesses to fill those meetings. It can be done either way. I've seen it done both ways. It usually depends on the will of the committee.

The Chair: Mr. Rogers, then Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I was going to go back to an earlier comment I made about how these are proposed resolutions as a work plan for the committee, subject to change. It comes back to taking each of these, prioritizing, and then deciding what we're going to do first, second, third and so on. We could also, at that point in time, once we've prioritized, start to determine a tentative schedule for the next number of weeks and which studies we'd like to do. Based on that, we may bring back to the entire committee a suggestion as to whether we do four, five, or six, at that point in time.

I don't know if we need to make the decision today on each of these. I think the number of meetings, six, is based on a generic number that we use for a lot of studies we do, particularly if they're broad in scope. I'd propose that we just leave "as is" these resolutions regarding the number of meetings, and that the committee decide as we go forward, the subcommittee and then the entire committee. If we want to make changes or suggestions as we move along, we certainly can do that.

The Chair: It's somewhat of a placeholder is what it is.

Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: I agree with Mr. Barsalou-Duval. I 100% agree with the gentleman across the way.

When you determine the day, the number of meetings per study, it gives us some direction on how much time we need to give. It's such a broad study. As my colleague was saying, we should leave it as it is and the subcommittee's going to decide later on. We don't need to get into the nitty-gritty now. Leave it as it is and then the subcommittee can decide later on. We're not held to six meetings. It could take five. It could take four and a half. We don't know. If we're not getting to a solution, we might extend it. It depends on the quality of the witnesses.

I'd say to leave it as it is and then we can decide.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sidhu.

Let's just take the next step now and turn the page.

First off, I heard a lot of amendments, but I will bring forward as an amendment what Mr. Davidson said with respect to all of these—to put "subject to change" after an asterisk. Is everybody okay with that?

Mr. Bittle, go ahead.

Mr. Chris Bittle: As a process thing, since we have the power to change regardless, do we really have to put it in there? The committee can—

Mr. Scot Davidson: Well, what have we been talking about for half an hour? It's unbelievable.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I'm just chairing the meeting. I'm just listening.

A voice: Leave it as it is.

The Chair: Leave it as it is, okay. We're fine.

Back to that motion, no amendments.

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

The Chair: Moving to the next motion, Mr. Rogers. I don't think it's necessary to read it.

Mr. Rogers, you're moving that motion.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I'm moving the motion, if you please.

The Chair: Yes, "That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2)..."

Are there any questions or comments on that motion?

Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I have a comment on it.

I just want to speak to the importance of a study of this. I am from a rural area with connectivity issues and severe gaps in our wireless. I mentioned earlier that I attended to a car accident on the weekend. The radios of our emergency services personnel would not work, nor did we have cell service there. This is a study that I think is a very important, and I support it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Doherty.

Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm very supportive and incredibly interested in this piece. Even in my riding of Markham—Stouffville, being on the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges Moraine, there are amazing gaps in connectivity. Obviously it affects rural areas, but it affects those that have urban core and then surrounding rural areas.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

In the spirit of collaboration, I want to echo the sentiments of both members that this is critical for public safety reasons. In my riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, we had a single-vehicle car accident, a rollover. The driver had to extract herself from the vehicle and crawl to a home to use their land line because her cellphone didn't work there.

It is the same issue that Mr. Doherty raised about first responders not having radio coverage throughout their areas of responsibility. It is a huge problem.

Though there was some funding provided in eastern Ontario in partnership with the municipalities, the Province of Ontario, and the federal government in 2019, by the time that infrastructure is upgraded, it will be five years too late. The technology is moving faster than we're implementing the changes.

It's tremendously important, and though I'm just filling the seat for today, I'll be watching the committee's work on this subject with great interest. It's tremendously important that six meetings, or fewer, are held on that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett, and with any contribution you want to make, you're more than welcome to bring a submission forward.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a bit of a technical question about the motion put forward yesterday. I think it's a good one, but I want to make sure I understand what “digital infrastructure” refers to. What does that cover? Are we talking about wireless Internet, wired Internet, cellular networks?

I'd like to know. Perhaps the analysts or those familiar with the subject could explain to me, in more practical terms, what is meant by “digital infrastructure”.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'll let the analyst answer that question.

Ms. Geneviève Gosselin: I don't have much to say. Usually we are talking about broadband. I guess that would be the case here.

Mr. Todd Doherty: And wireless.

Ms. Geneviève Gosselin: Yes, wireless and digital infrastructure.

I know that the industry committee did a report about this a year ago. Maybe we could send it to you to see if we want to explore something a bit different from what they did or if we want to do the same. It's just food for thought.

• (1620)

The Chair: If I could add to that, besides what we did in the last session with respect to the information we received, it was very broad.

In my former life in municipal government, one of the things we worked on very diligently was providing fibre, for example, into the rural areas that didn't have high speed. However, it goes beyond that. It also goes beyond the “how”: How can we actually encourage especially the private sector to go into those areas when those returns might not be available for them?

It's working with the municipalities to create their own authorities, for example, create their own companies, whether with local electrical distribution companies, to fund the capital as well as the operation of creating a fibre company.

On emergency preparedness, especially in the rural areas, when something happens like an ice storm, it is very difficult to communicate, especially when the public is not prompted. What I mean by that is that if you have situation where.... For example, my city is on a canal. We may have a diesel spill and the intake is right there. Now nobody is prompted to that; no one knows that within the community. How do you prompt them when sometimes you don't have any communication abilities? A discussion like that has to be held.

I'm digging a bit deeper into the weeds, which I think you wanted, but it's a fulsome discussion when it comes to communications or lack thereof.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Like CN announcing a thousand layoffs.

The Chair: Okay, Todd, you sounded great.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes, it was a good question.

The Chair: Are there further questions or comments?

Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Further to my colleague's point, I'm wondering if the analysts could let us know whether “digital infrastructure” is now the nomenclature being used. I have also heard “broadband” or “Internet”. These terms all get used interchangeably. For the purpose of specificity, so that we all know what we're studying, I think it's a useful conversation, if that's now the accepted term, then, as long as we.... We're talking about Internet to rural areas, correct? Are we talking about cellphone coverage? Are we talking about all these other—

The Chair: All of the above.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Do we mean anything that's digital, ones and zeros?

Ms. Geneviève Gosselin: That's the motion. If we specify broadband, then it's only broadband.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I just think it's quite.... The word "digital" is a very broad and all-encompassing word.

Mr. Scot Davidson: That's what we want.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Most of the technology we use now involves ones and zeros.

My preference would be that we really zero in on what I think is the key issue, which is getting acceptable Internet access to the rural parts of Canada.

Mr. Churence Rogers: And cell service.

The Chair: Are there further questions or comments on this?

Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much.

One of the reasons we ask for 48 hours' notice to consider a motion is that it gives us time to study the wording of the motions and see if there are things that can be added to them or not. Since I only received these draft motions this afternoon, it is difficult for me, as the critic for infrastructure, to say whether the motion covers exactly all the topics we need to deal with.

For example, in the minister's mandate letter, the Prime Minister mandates the Canada Infrastructure Bank to bring high-speed Internet service to every Canadian home and business by 2030. This is an extremely important part of a study that we are going to do on Internet service, to see what the Canada Infrastructure Bank's plan will be to carry out that part of the mandate that has been given to four ministers: the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities.

I want to advise members of the committee that I'm going to move some amendments to this motion. It is indeed a major issue, I agree, but I will certainly amend this motion. I would in fact like to have the clerk's advice in this regard.

Madam Clerk, how do I amend a motion once we've passed it? Do I just speak up and say I want to amend this motion or that motion, or do I have to have the consent of the sponsor of the motion to amend it?

• (1625)

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Clerk.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: It depends on the context of your amendment.

If the committee has already made a decision on the item in question and has moved on to something else, for example, when we are in a meeting and there are witnesses, 48 hours' notice must be given, because it does not relate to the matter before the commit-

tee at that time. However, if the debate is in progress and you have an amendment to move, you can move it immediately, without notice, because it deals with the business before the committee.

The same applies to motions before the committee. At your first meeting, you adopted routine motions that specify that if the item is related to the subject matter before the committee, such as business before the committee, the notice period is not required. However, if it relates to something else, notice must be given.

Mr. Luc Berthold: For example, today I could give notice that I am proposing to amend any motion and we could discuss it in 48 hours.

The Clerk: You could discuss it immediately.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Today, yes. However, if it's Tuesday and I've had time to study the motion and I want to propose some changes, I'll send you a notice and we'll discuss it later, is that it?

The Clerk: Exactly.

Mr. Luc Berthold: That could change this motion without any problem, correct? In other words, nothing prevents me from moving a motion to amend another motion.

The Clerk: Precisely.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Sidhu.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Perfect.

[*English*]

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: As my colleague, Mr. Bachrach, was saying about studying Internet or cellphones, we're having an issue with both in rural ridings. I think it's important to look at both issues and leave it broadly based.

When we have witnesses here, we can zero in on what needs to be done to help these rural ridings, because there's an issue with Internet connectivity for studying and education, and there's also an issue with first responders in terms of cellphones. I think we should leave it as is and then we can zero in depending on what the needs are.

The Chair: Are there any further questions or comments?

Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Just to complement Mr. Sidhu's point very quickly, in Eastern Ontario, which is made up of several ridings, 40% of the area does not have access to high definition services that allow streaming and HD services. You might say, "Someone can't watch Netflix. What does that do to their quality of life?" It also affects education and working from home. There are lots of home-based businesses and rural-based businesses. It also affects delivery of federal and provincial services electronically.

Twenty percent of the area does not have access to standard definition video, typical mobile app use or video app calling. Most smart phone services are not operable in 20% of the region, and 10% of this region has no voice call service at all. You can't even use a cellphone. That goes to the heart of the issue.

To your question on the broad umbrella that digital infrastructure covers, there's the high-speed Internet access that's covered by laying fibre optic cables or over-the-air Internet, but the cell gap also needs to be closed. "Digital infrastructure" is how it was characterized by both the Province of Ontario and the federal government in addressing it last year, and so it's been helpful to use that all-encompassing term, in my opinion.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there further questions or comments?

All those in favour of the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We'll move on to the next motion.

Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers: The next motion reads:

That the Committee commit to undertake a study on the Gas Tax Fund. And that, in consultation with the Committee Members, the Chair be empowered to coordinate the resources and scheduling necessary to execute these studies in 6 meetings or fewer.

The Chair: Are there any questions or comments on this motion?

Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: How do you want to approach this subject? This is about the federal Gas Tax Fund. It's a large study.

What questions do you want to address? Do you want to discuss infrastructure?

I find the terms of reference really very broad, and I think, therefore, that the analysts will have difficulty determining the exact subject matter of the study. The study falls under several sectors, including finance. I think we need to be more specific.

• (1630)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers: The intent is to work with organizations and municipalities across the country and to question people like the FCM about the value of the fund to all of these municipalities that receive the gas tax fund, and for what intended purpose they want to use it.

They keep asking and requesting that we double the gas tax fund. We want to try to get a good appreciation of why they're requesting that doubling. What's the value to municipalities? We're trying to get at the value of that particular fund.

The Chair: Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Would it be appropriate for you to submit something more detailed to us?

I totally agree with the angle that is proposed, namely the municipal needs, but I find it too vague.

Could you submit a new proposal?

[*English*]

Mr. Churence Rogers: Yes, and we'd be open to your making suggestions on specific things related to a gas tax fund that you'd like to see covered. We could be open to that. It's something that we could bring to the subcommittee and have a look at it and bring back to the committee. I invite all the members here to offer suggestions to make this more specific to where you want to see it go.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Are we going to defer the motion?

[*English*]

Mr. Churence Rogers: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I share Mr. Berthold's concern about the broadness of the motion. Compared to the other motions before us, which all speak directly to pressing issues in our country, it seems to me, as someone who worked for several years in local government as a mayor, that the gas tax fund was recently broadened considerably. The criteria were almost entirely eliminated and this fund can be used by municipalities for most of their infrastructure needs.

The concerns I hear coming forward from the municipal sector are not about the application of the Gas Tax Fund but only that it is not big enough. I don't know if we need to study whether or not it needs to be bigger. I would rather allocate that effort elsewhere.

It's clearly an important fund for municipalities, but the key message I'm hearing is that they want an increase and I'm not sure that.... In my view, that's clearly justified, but what are we going to be studying exactly?

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I'd like to take issue with what my colleague on the left said.

I would like to point out that municipalities have expressed many concerns and requests regarding the federal Gas Tax Fund to me, not only in terms of the amount but also in terms of the criteria. All the more so since there has been a tightening of the criteria for access to this fund, for which city halls and fire stations are no longer eligible. This can have a major impact, not so much on large municipalities as on villages and small municipalities, which are very concerned about this issue.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bittle, go ahead, please.

Mr. Chris Bittle: This is just a suggestion going forward. I know the subcommittee met, and these are all excellent points to bring up. Generally in my experience from the committees I've been on, the subcommittee meets, and especially if there is consensus—and I don't know if there was—a report comes up, and it is adopted. We seem to be going over very technical points of the study, which are excellent for the subcommittee. I appreciate their valid concerns, and you're right to bring them up, but this is why we have the subcommittee.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Doherty, go ahead, please.

Mr. Todd Doherty: The challenge, Mr. Bittle, is that these were tabled at the subcommittee and the whole committee did not have a chance to have a conversation about the motions that are here.

They were agreed to at the time with the subcommittee members, and they agreed to bring them forward at this meeting to have further conversation.

Mr. Rogers was kind enough to say that he was simply bringing them forward for discussion at that time.

I do want to mention something on this, so forgive me, committee members. I believe it was this committee last year that studied the gas tax fund, or perhaps it might have been another committee. It was very interesting for me that first nations communities did not have access to the gas tax fund and that, consistently, many of the first nations communities didn't even know that they had to apply for it, whereas other communities and municipalities simply get it and it's bankable. They can count on that information.

It would be interesting for us. That would be an interesting aspect of this study, I think.

For the preservation of time, do we as a committee agree that we want to push this or study it, or not study it at all? I think this is something that we need to move forward with as we are now at 4:30. We have another hour left to go and we have some other things we need to talk about.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Doherty.

Before I go to Mr. Davidson and then Mr. Bachrach, the question was asked of Mr. Bachrach about more specifics. I'll add a few of my comments and then I have to go to Mr. Davidson.

We are a committee not just of transport, but of infrastructure and communities. That's number one. And, of course, the last time around in this committee we were consumed by transport issues. We never really got into infrastructure or communities, which I look forward to doing, by the way. It's up to the committee.

Mr. Doherty touched on one thing. The gas tax fund was introduced in 2005 and it's now 2020. Is there a need to update it, especially when it comes to indigenous communities and their access to that fund?

The second part of it is the collaboration with the municipalities. That can then get deeper into the weeds in terms of the need for that gas tax fund.

Lastly are the criteria, and I've heard a lot of that. With your coming from a municipal background, I'm sure you have a lot of opinions on that.

Ultimately it's going to be up to the committee, as well as the witnesses, to determine what those discussions are going to be.

Mr. Davidson.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I would echo your comments. I hope we can move forward on this. I think it's an important topic, and as the vice-chair pointed out regarding first nations, this topic came up with the Chippewas of Georgina Island.

This came up in my riding, especially with climate change. We made a request. We had a creek washed out in my riding, and we didn't meet the criteria for the gas tax fund, so I think it's important that we look at this.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I appreciate the conversation, Mr. Chair, and certainly the points raised around the table are good ones. I believe the previous question was about the broadness of the motion. Unlike the other motions, it doesn't necessarily speak to those points. Now that we've had the conversation, I have a better sense of where people are going with their interest in the issue.

I wanted to speak briefly to Mr. Bittle's comment about the confusion between the work of the subcommittee and the work of the committee. My understanding is that every committee functions somewhat differently.

I was wondering if we might, as a committee, come up with a shared understanding of how those two function and an agreement that perhaps the motions should land at this committee and then go to the subcommittee for discussion and prioritization, or vice versa, but that we agree on one so we're not duplicating our efforts and confusing ourselves.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you.

You wanted some clarification on that. I'll put my neck out.

I think the intent of the subcommittee is simply to discuss the topics at hand. In this case it's committee business. As I said earlier, the intent is to get everything on the table, so that way we can bring recommendations to the committee. There's no question that there is an expectation that the committee does have a dialogue with respect to the recommendations, as we are having today.

I guess there is an expectation that those who participate in the committee meeting would bring forward the recommendations. Although other comments may be made at the committee meeting, they would be consistent with what was said at the subcommittee meeting. But things do change, and I get that. Of course, from there the decision is ultimately made by the committee itself.

Mr. Doherty and I did have a small chat today about being a bit more, for lack of a better word, sympathetic to some of those comments that may come forward versus what's recommended at the subcommittee, because ultimately, a subcommittee is just a subcommittee. As I said earlier, it's in the purview of the committee, moving forward. As the chair I want to be very staunch that things may change, things may be amended, things may be added or things might be deleted. That's up to you folks. Although it might go to the subcommittee first, again, changes can happen at the committee level and the debate would be expected to then make that ultimate decision in what direction it would be taken.

Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty: To answer Mr. Bachrach's question, the normal procedure would be that a motion would be brought forward at the time of the committee. At that time, we would either adopt it or go into a subcommittee or go in camera to have a further conversation. The subcommittee is the one that would then decide whether we're moving forward, similar to what we did yesterday.

What happened yesterday was an anomaly. That's why the question was brought up earlier today. Mr. Rogers did mention that as discussion points, the motions were table-dropped at subcommittee, but normally what would happen is that.... That's why a number of times yesterday comments were made that we need to give others around the committee an opportunity to make comments regarding these motions.

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I appreciate the clarification. I understand from Mr. Doherty that what happened at the subcommittee, where all of these motions got dropped, was an anomaly.

My simple request is that we have a shared understanding that, in future, the motions will drop at the main committee and be sent to the subcommittee, as opposed to vice versa. We've heard around the table a frustration with the lack of notice. People are reading them for the first time, especially if they're not a member of the subcommittee. In the interest of working together in a co-operative way, where we don't get frustrated with each other.... We now have in front of us 42 meetings of work, all dropped at the subcommittee. It's my desire that we have a clear.... We had a discussion about how the subcommittee was going to work. Then it worked in an anomalous way, as Mr. Doherty said.

It's frustrating, that's all.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Jaczek.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: To go back to the motion in front of us, when I read it for the first time today, I was really struck by the breadth of it and the need to zone in on what we really want to talk about. Is it possible to refer it back to the subcommittee, at this point, for some amendment and some clarification? Or is anyone prepared to try to do that right here and now?

It strikes me that we need a lot more clarification on what exactly needs to be studied.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: I agree with you, Mr. Davidson, that every municipality is different. You were saying there were some qualifications that didn't...fall for the creek. I know that in my riding, there were some projects that did not; you know, there were different types of projects that didn't fall through.

I think leaving it wide would help a lot of the members here to get some support and some guidance on how we can make this program a little bit better.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: You could amend it to say "and examine criteria for eligibility for the fund", just as an example.

• (1645)

The Chair: Are there any more questions or comments on this?

I will go to the motion.

All those in favour? Opposed?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, just a point of order—

The Chair: That one carried—

Mr. Luc Berthold: No, I had a point of order before it carried.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes. I had a proposal to postpone it, to rewrite it. This is what I asked before.

The Chair: Is this a point of order?

The Chair: Okay. That's fine, Mr. Berthold, but were you putting that forward as an amendment?

Mr. Luc Berthold: I asked, but I didn't receive any answer on the proposal.

The Chair: I know you asked, but were you actually proposing that as an amendment to—

Mr. Luc Berthold: No, I asked it as a friendly.... I asked Mr. Rogers just to postpone it to the next meeting.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I thought I had indicated that I would be open to suggestions from the committee.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I would certainly welcome any suggestions to make this a little bit more specific.

Mr. Todd Doherty: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: There was no decision on the—

Mr. Churence Rogers: Mr. Doherty mentioned, for example, indigenous communities. That certainly could be incorporated into something, and whatever we think is important—

The Chair: I need some clarification on this. Are we referring this or are we passing it and then looking at bringing it back with more meat on the bone? What are we doing?

Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Chair, can I suggest to Mr. Rogers...?

Every time I say that, I get a different vision in my head of “Mr. Rogers”.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Todd Doherty: Can I suggest that you remove your motion, that you withdraw your motion, and that it be edited and brought back at the next meeting?

The Chair: Is everybody okay with that?

Mr. Churence Rogers: I'm good with that.

The Chair: You're okay with that? That's fine? Okay.

We're moving on. Thank you. So we're for that.

Can I have a motion to refer, please?

Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Okay.

The Chair: All in favour?

(Motion withdrawn [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Let's go to the next one.

Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I move the following:

That the Committee commit to undertake a study focusing on how can the Investing in Canada program best be used to advance green innovation, for example creating jobs and reducing GHG emissions by expanding the climate lens to cover all Government of Canada infrastructure investments all while making investments in communities to ensure their long term success and resiliency. The study would also look to identify how we can expand the climate-lens for infrastructure projects. And that, in consultation with the Committee Members, the Chair be empowered to coordinate the resources and scheduling necessary to execute these studies in 6 meetings or fewer.

The Chair: Are there any questions or comments on this motion? All those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one, please, Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers: I move:

That the Committee commit to undertake a review and provide recommendations on how the Government of Canada can electrify public transportation across the country. Review other international jurisdictions, municipalities, provinces and provide best practices. And that, in consultation with Committee Members, the Chair be empowered to coordinate the resources and scheduling necessary to execute these studies in 6 meetings or fewer.

The Chair: Are there questions or comments?

Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I really support the direction of this motion. I'm just wondering about “electrify public transportation”. It's quite broad. I know the discussion right now is really focused on

the electrification of bus fleets. I wonder if the mover would welcome an amendment, friendly or otherwise, to change it to “electrifying bus fleets across the country”.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Churence Rogers: If I could note, Mr. Bachrach, it was the NDP member yesterday who suggested that we move away from just focusing on buses to other public transportation, so your colleague—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: In that case, I can understand the laughter around the table. I'll leave it as is.

Mr. Churence Rogers: We had initially suggested “buses”. I don't recall her name, but anyway—

Mr. Todd Doherty: It was your fill-in—

Mr. Churence Rogers: —she wanted it broader.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: In the spirit of collaboration, we could start by—

The Chair: Which one do you want?

Mr. Churence Rogers: If you're good with that, we'll...

The Chair: That's fine?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It sounds fine.

The Chair: Are there further questions or comments? All those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next, please, Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Okay:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities undertake a study focusing on economic development in rural Canada; that the study review tax credits and other incentives for promoting growth in rural economies; that the study examine the infrastructure needs required to grow and diversify rural economies; that the study seek to identify how the Government can take a systematic approach to ensuring federal investments are attentive to rural needs and realities; that the Committee report its findings to the House; and that the Committee request a government response to its report. And that, in consultation with the Committee Members, the Chair be empowered to coordinate the resources and scheduling necessary to execute these studies in 6 meetings or fewer.

● (1650)

The Chair: Are there questions or comments? All those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any other business?

Madam Clerk, do you have anything else? Nothing?

We will move to adjourn.

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