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Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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Tuesday, December 14, 2021

Chair: Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia



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• (1120)

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Alexandre Longpré): Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, entertain points of order or participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party.

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Good day, everyone.

I would like to nominate for our chair Francis Scarpaleggia from the Liberal Party.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Albas that Mr. Scarpaleggia be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

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

I invite Mr. Scarpaleggia to take the chair.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): It's nice to be here in person.

Thank you very much to all. It's an honour and a pleasure to be in this role again.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much for your support.

I hope everyone is doing well. This is the first time, if I'm not mistaken, that I've chaired a hybrid meeting, with a screen and some members in the room.

Since there are a lot of new faces, it was suggested that I go around the table to give everyone 10 to 15 seconds to introduce themselves.

Mr. Albas, could you introduce yourself?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Congratulations on your election. I know you're going to be quite capable, which is why I put your name forward. I didn't know if that would be the death knell of your chairmanship.

It's great to be here. I'm Dan Albas for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola. I worked very co-operatively in the last one. That might be contested by some parties, but I really look forward to this session and to working with the environment committee. I welcome all those newly elected—congratulations—but also those reappointed or those who have been on this committee. It's good to be working with you again.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Davidson.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, congratulations on your election as chair.

Good morning, colleagues. We're going to have fun. I'm Scot Davidson for York—Simcoe. I call it Lake Simcoe, home of the Holland Marsh—the soup and salad bowl of Canada and ice fishing capital of Canada. I'm really looking forward to this committee. Thanks, and good morning, everyone.

The Chair: Mr. Dreeshen.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and congratulations.

My name is Earl Dreeshen, member of Parliament for Red Deer—Mountain View. I come here with experience on international trade; industry, science and technology; and agriculture. I know that the environment is very significant to all of those sectors in Canada, so it's an honour for me to be here.

Thank you.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Good morning, everyone. I'm Dan Mazier, Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, Manitoba.

Congratulations, Chair.

My predecessor, you probably all know, was Bob Sopuck. The location of my riding is basically west-central Manitoba.

Welcome to all new committee members.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Hello, my name is Monique Pauzé and I am a member of the Bloc Québécois. I was a member of the committee during the last Parliament.

Mr. Chair, you presided over our meetings then and you did the work very well. May I congratulate you once again on your election.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I would like to say to the new members that in the last Parliament this committee did very good work. We agreed on a number of things, we moved forward on issues, and we passed a number of measures.

I welcome you and invite you to join our fine committee in 2022.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Pauzé.

[*English*]

Mr. Duguid.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Good morning, colleagues. It's great to see everyone in person and on the screen. My name is Terry Duguid. I am the member of Parliament for Winnipeg South. My riding hosts Investors Group stadium, the home of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, Grey Cup champions.

Voices: Hear, hear!

Mr. Terry Duguid: I don't see any Saskatchewanians here.

In the last term, I was the parliamentary secretary to two ministers, one of which was the Honourable Mélanie Joly, with responsibilities for western diversification. I like to think that, like Dan, I bring that perspective to the table. I was also the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, with special responsibilities for freshwater and nature conservation.

I think this is going to be a fabulous committee. I'm really looking forward to working with my colleagues on the screen and all of you. I think we're going to do some great work for Canada.

I love Lake Simcoe.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Duguid.

I see five members on the screen, so we'll start with Ms. Collins.

It's been a long time since we've seen each other. A lot has happened in your life. I hope your daughter Alora is well.

Welcome back to the committee.

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, and congratulations on your election.

My name is Laurel Collins. I bring some experience from city council. I'm very passionate about protecting the environment and tackling the climate crisis. I'm really looking forward to working with all of you. It was really great last Parliament, and I think we're going to have a similar experience this time.

Thanks so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

It's great to see the returning members. We had a good time together last time.

Dan, I would say that your poems launching our meetings were always welcome. You always bring great skill to any committee.

We really do work well together, and I look forward to working with the rest of the members who are here.

My riding is Guelph. It's a very active environmental centre. It has always been a very progressive community when it comes to environmental issues. I'm glad to be on this committee so that I can bring some of the voice of Guelph to it.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Longfield.

Ms. Thompson.

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): I'm here from St. John's East in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm very excited to be on this committee. Obviously, the environment is such a concern for all of us. I'm quite pleased to be here. I hear it's a fabulous committee. I look forward to getting to know you.

I'm sorry that I'm virtual today, but certainly in the new year I look forward to being face to face with you. Hopefully, we'll be able to have more meetings in person. I am so pleased to be here.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Weiler.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's an honour and a privilege to be on this committee. I look forward to working with everybody here.

I'm the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. I come at this line of work from an environmental and aboriginal law background. Hopefully, I can add some expertise to this work. I'm really looking forward to getting started.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Taylor Roy.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you.

My name is Leah Taylor Roy, and I am the new member of Parliament for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

I'm very glad that I have figured out how to get this audio to work.

It's a pleasure to be here with you all. I am adjacent to Scot Davidson. In fact, we have something in common. I went to school in the Holland Marsh, and I worked on farms in the Holland Marsh. The environment there and the farmland there are near and dear to my heart.

I'm very interested in the conservation and protection of environmental land and in the agricultural methods that will protect our environment and food supply.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I would like to echo what other members have talked about this being a very friendly and collaborative committee. We got a lot of work done in the last Parliament. I'm sure that will be the case again in the 44th Parliament.

I would just like to go over a couple of points related to public health. Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations from health authorities as well as the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on October 19, 2021, to remain healthy and safe, all those attending the meeting in person are to maintain a two-metre physical distancing. They must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room. It is highly recommended that the mask be worn at all times, including when people are seated. They must maintain proper hand hygiene by using the provided hand sanitizer at the room entrance.

As chair, I will be enforcing these measures for the duration of the meetings. I thank members in advance for their co-operation.

I would now like to suggest that we move on to the routine motions—

A voice: What about the elections of the vice-chairs?

The Chair: I'm so sorry.

Again, this hybrid format will take some getting used to.

We should proceed to the election of the vice-chairs.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Chair, with great pleasure I would like to nominate Mr. Dan Albas as vice-chair from the Conservative Party.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Albas, do you accept the nomination?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Yes.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Perfect.

Are there any further motions?

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: I'd like to nominate, from the Bloc Québécois, Monique Pauzé as vice-chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Pauzé, would you agree to be vice-chair of the committee?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: It will be my pleasure, Mr. Chair. We won't leave you without back-up.

The Chair: Seeing no further motions, I congratulate Mr. Albas and Ms. Pauzé on their election as vice-chairs of this great committee.

I think we've done everything in terms of structuring the committee. So we can move on to the routine motions; the clerk has provided you with the list.

Are there any movers?

• (1130)

[*English*]

Mr. Longfield, go ahead, please.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Congratulations to the vice-chairs who have rejoined the leadership of this committee.

On the routine motions that we have before us, I'll start with the analyst services. I move:

That the committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the Chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist in its work.

The Chair: Are there comments?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: On the subcommittee on agenda and procedure, I move:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five members; the Chair, one member from each recognized party; and that the subcommittee work in a spirit of collaboration.

The Chair: Are there any objections?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: On meeting without a quorum, I move:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence published when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four members are present, including two members of the opposition parties and two members of the government party, but when travelling outside the Parliamentary Precinct, that the meetings begin after 15 minutes, regardless of members present.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Longfield.

Does everyone agree with that?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: On time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses, I move:

That the witnesses be given five minutes for their opening statement; and that whenever possible, witnesses provide the committee with their opening statement 72 hours in advance; that at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated six minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows for the first round: Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois, New Democratic Party.

For the second and subsequent rounds, that the order and time of questioning be as follows: Conservative Party, five minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes; Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes; New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes; Conservative Party, five minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Longfield.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Longfield, please continue.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: On document distribution, I move:

That only the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the committee provided the documents are in both official languages, and that the witnesses be advised accordingly.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: On working meals, I move:

That the clerk of the committee, at the discretion of the Chair, be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the committee and its subcommittee.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Hearing no opposition, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Longfield, please read the next motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: On travel, accommodation and living expenses of witnesses, I move:

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

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall the motion carry?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Can I ask a quick question?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Dan Albas: I really appreciate how the previous committee was.

I would just like to hear the commitment of the clerk that reasonable costs.... If there's a person with a disability who needs extra help and assistance, that's considered reasonable. I just want to hear from the clerk that the taxpayer will also be considered in his decisions, especially when we're in the realm of so much Zoom business and telecommunications, like phone and videoconferencing.

The Clerk: Reasonable expenses will be held.

As of right now, the routine motion that was passed in the House on November 25 said that all witnesses are to appear virtually for the time being. As long as that motion is still in effect, witnesses will be appearing virtually for committee meetings.

• (1135)

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for raising that, Mr. Albas.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Longfield, can you read the motion on in camera meetings?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: On access to in camera meetings, I move:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff member at in camera meetings and that one additional person from each House officer's office be allowed to be present.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

On transcripts of in camera meetings, I move:

That one copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee or by their staff; and that the analysts assigned to the committee also have access to the in camera transcripts.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Dan Albas: Can I ask a question?

Mr. Dan Albas: If a member of this 44th Parliament committee would like to look at some of the in camera discussions or whatnot, what would be the protocol for that for the previous committee? Are they authorized access to that?

The Clerk: As of right now, the committee information is archived, so they would need to pass a motion to bring that evidence back and to reaccess it at the present time.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: That's a good question, Mr. Albas.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: On the notice of motion, I move:

That a 48-hour notice, interpreted as two nights, be required for any substantive motion to be moved in committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, provided that: (a) the notice be filed with the clerk of the committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; (b) the motion be distributed to Members and the offices of the whips of each recognized party in both official languages by the clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour; (c) notices received after the deadline hour or on non-business days be deemed to have been received during the next business day; and that when the committee is holding meetings outside the Parliamentary Precinct, no substantive motion may be moved.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have a point of clarification, for my own understanding. If a motion is submitted before 4 p.m. on a Friday, do the Saturday and Sunday count as two nights, or do they have to be business-day nights?

The Clerk: It's business-day nights. If members submitted a motion on Friday before 4 p.m., it would be admissible on Tuesday at that point.

The Chair: Perfect. I was curious.

Mr. Dan Albas: Is that on Tuesday at 11 a.m., or would that be on Tuesday at 4 p.m.?

The Chair: That's a good point.

The Clerk: It could be moved on Monday. My apologies.

Mr. Dan Albas: It's a great question.

The Chair: That's how we work in this committee. We go for the truth.

Does everyone agree with that motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: What's next, Mr. Longfield?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: On orders of reference from the House respecting bills, I move:

That in relation to orders of reference from the House respecting Bills,

(a) The clerk of the committee shall, upon the committee receiving such an order of reference, write to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee to invite those members to file with the clerk of the committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the committee consider;

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

• (1140)

The Chair: Mr. Longfield, there are just two left.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Yes, on technical tests for witnesses, I move:

That the clerk inform each witness who is to appear before the committee that the House administration support team must conduct technical tests to check the connectivity and the equipment used to ensure the best possible sound quality; and that the Chair advise the committee, at the start of each meeting, of any witnesses who did not perform the required technical tests.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I have a question of clarification, because this has happened a number of times and we do want to protect our interpreters.

The motion says that we will do tests, that is “check the connectivity and the equipment used to ensure the best possible sound quality”.

Who deems the sound quality to be acceptable for witnesses to deliver their comments? Do we rely on the interpreters to tell us

that the sound quality is acceptable or not? If it is unacceptable, can we then stop the witness from giving evidence?

Do you understand the question? “The best possible sound quality” is a bit subjective.

Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, there were times last spring when a witness did not have the right equipment and the interpreters were not able to hear him well. The interpreters were advising us through our headsets that they could not hear the witness well.

When that happens, we can reschedule the witness to another session.

The Chair: Okay.

In fact, I am asking for your permission to stop a witness if the interpreters say the sound quality is unacceptable.

Do you agree?

[*English*]

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Longfield has something.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: The way we functioned last time was to say that the equipment the witnesses were using had to be supplied by the House of Commons.

The Chair: Yes, but that doesn't seem to be in the motion.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Could I...?

The Chair: There could be a piece of equipment that's just as good, but has not been supplied. It may even be superior.

What did you want to say, Mr. Longfield?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: No, I'll leave it. I was just bringing that forward as to how we operated in the previous session.

The Chair: Indeed. As I read this, if the interpreters say this is not good enough, then I have permission to say to the witness, “Sorry, but you'll have to procure some proper equipment or we'll try to make alternative arrangements, but you cannot continue your statement.” Is that good?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Longfield, please move the last routine motion.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On linguistic review, I move:

That all documents submitted for committee business that do not come from a federal department, members' offices, or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau be sent for prior linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members.

Mr. Dan Albas: I just want to make a statement, though, that we've had, in some cases, government departments come in and table-drop documents. That is not helpful. I would just encourage you, Mr. Chair, to work with the clerk to always emphasize that, if a department is going to be coming in and they have prepared documents, those must be supplied to the committee as soon as possible so as to make sure they're available in both English and French.

The Chair: Was it not a given that if you brought documents they had to be in both official languages? That was agreed. That's always been the case.

It is, "That all documents submitted for committee business that do not come from a federal department" have been translated. Okay, we will always encourage witnesses to supply the documents ahead of time.

Mr. Dan Albas: We did have a government department.... The date and the department name escapes me at the moment because, quite honestly, this committee can be a blur. We did have a case where a government department did not submit in both official languages, and that caused a big issue.

The Chair: That makes sense.

Mr. Dan Albas: Again, if you could, always proactively remind them.

The Chair: Yes, for sure.

• (1145)

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Chair, because I'm new to the committee, on the topic of documents, I just wonder if we could have the clerk send us the Minister of Environment's mandate letter. This is so important in this committee, so that we know what direction we're headed over the holidays.

The Chair: I don't believe the mandate letters have been issued yet.

Mr. Scot Davidson: After two months, still no mandate letters...?

The Chair: I can't answer that, because—

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: We're still on routine motions.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Okay. It was just on the topic of documents.

The Chair: Okay.

Are we good with the last routine motion?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Chair: Thank you, by the way, for signalling verbally. It's hard to keep track of whether a hand is up. Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Chair, I wanted to also put forward a routine motion.

The Chair: Perhaps I can first take a moment to say that we passed the motion for the analysts to be named to their positions. We passed the routine motion for working meals. I would now like to invite the analysts to take their seats.

Oh, I'm sorry; I didn't see you. This going to take some getting used to.

There's an analyst at home, I think.

Natacha, it's nice to see you again. How are you? It's good to see you.

We have two analysts at the moment.

With regard to working meals, I would like to advise members to send any dietary restrictions they may have.

Go ahead, Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins: The motion is that, when it comes to the makeup of witness panels during studies, each party represented on the committee be entitled to select one witness per panel; that if no witness is designated by a party a decision be made by the clerk, after consultation with the chair; that this motion not apply when ministers or government officials appear before committee; and that, where there are circumstances where this condition cannot be met, the chair and the clerk consult with members of the subcommittee to finalize the makeup of the panel.

The Chair: Okay.

It's nice to see you, Alison. I'm sorry. You were just a little blocked out on the screen.

Who would like to speak to that? Would anyone like to speak to that?

Go ahead, Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: It seems to me that there will be many cases where we're all in agreement on witnesses. At that point, how do you determine which party that witness is here representing? Generally speaking, the witness list is provided for and by all parties. The clerk does the panels based on availability at the time. Some witnesses from some parties may or may not be able to attend. I think this puts some constraints on the clerks to be able to do their jobs.

In terms of the questioning, we all have an opportunity to question the witnesses from our own policy platforms or from our own constituencies. I think we're hand-tying the clerk on this one. I would prefer to work on the witness lists prior to the meetings to make sure that we all have a chance to get the witnesses we would like to see on the list. Then it's up to the clerk to try to get them to the meetings for us.

The Chair: I'm looking at the screen and the table. Does anyone have their hand up here?

Ms. Collins, is your hand back up?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Yes, Mr. Chair, my hand is back up.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Really, the intention behind this motion is to allow us to create witness panels where each party has representation and witnesses on each panel. It means that our committee meetings I think will be better served. We'll have a diversity of opinion.

Oftentimes in the last Parliament there were witness panels that were completely composed of witnesses that one or two parties had suggested. It makes for, I think, less helpful hours of committee—

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Chair...?

The Chair: Before I give the mike to Mr. Duguid, I will say this by way of background.

When it came to witness panels, I was always working with the clerk and telling the clerk to please have the panels represent the breakdown of the parties in the House. There was a conscious effort made to make sure that everyone was fairly represented. In many cases, in fact, the opposition witnesses were more prominent. In many cases, we kept trying for certain witnesses and they just weren't responding or...

Obviously, the committee will decide, but I am a little concerned that it will slow down the whole process of putting panels together, which sometimes can be a last-minute exercise.

I just want to assure you, Ms. Collins, that working with the clerk, we always wanted to make sure that, if anything, the opposition witnesses were overrepresented. We didn't want to be accused of not taking into account their wishes.

Mr. Duguid.

● (1150)

Mr. Terry Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks, Ms. Collins, for that suggestion.

It went by me, I must admit, Mr. Chair, pretty quickly. I wouldn't mind seeing it in writing. That's one issue. Might this be an issue that is referred to the steering committee so that you could have a conversation and just see whether it is something you can recommend to the overall committee?

The Chair: Ms. Collins, would you be amenable to submitting it in writing so that we can discuss it at the—

Ms. Laurel Collins: I have submitted it in writing to the clerk, if you want to email it around so that people can have it.

The Chair: Okay, and we'll discuss it at the steering committee, which you'll be on.

Ms. Laurel Collins: No, I would not be amenable to that. I would love to pass this here at committee today.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

We'll proceed to a vote, I guess. I haven't done this for a while.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Chair, I'd like to recommend a two-minute recess.

Mr. Dan Albas: Chair, you called the vote.

The Chair: Yes, it's true. I did call the vote. I'm sorry.

Thanks, Mr. Albas. I'm glad we have you as vice-chair.

The Clerk: We'll now proceed to a recorded division on the motion of Ms. Laurel Collins.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [See Minutes of Proceedings])

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I have a point of clarification.

What happens in the case where a witness is not available?

The Chair: Mr. Albas has a suggestion.

Mr. Dan Albas: I think it's pretty clear that when the rule can't be made.... I believe the last part of the motion read something like, "that the chair and clerk consult with members of the subcommittee". To me, that's a phone call or a text if we're not sitting, or just a casual conversation. I think the chair can make decisions.

The Chair: We can work with that, as long as we don't have to have a meeting. If it's a phone call or a text or a casual conversation, I think we can make this work.

Thanks for the point of clarification, Mr. Longfield.

Are there any other proposals?

Ms. Collins.

● (1155)

Ms. Laurel Collins: I have a motion that is not a routine motion, which I was hoping to table and maybe refer to the subcommittee. I'm just wondering if now is the time to do that or if we wait.

The Chair: Can we receive this motion? Yes, it's committee business.

Go ahead, Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins: The motion reads:

That, for the second meeting of the committee, the committee invite the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to provide a briefing on the office and role of the commissioner and the 2021 Fall Reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, and that the meeting be televised.

The Chair: Is there debate?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Chair, my intention was really to table this—

The Chair: And have the steering committee look at it.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Yes, but I just wanted to clarify it with you. I do want it to happen for the second meeting of the committee and to ensure that it would be possible if we are....

The Chair: Here's what I was thinking. I was thinking of having a meeting of the steering committee next week.

Mr. Clerk, does it have to be in the same time slot as we are today? We have members from the west coast, and 11 o'clock—

Mr. Dan Albas: It's fine.

The Chair: Is that fine? Okay.

I was hoping to have a steering committee meeting next week sometime, maybe next Tuesday, when we could talk about future committee business, including this motion. However, my understanding is, Ms. Collins, that for this to happen in the second meeting of the committee, we would have to get a steering committee report to the full committee to adopt. I don't think it can happen on the second meeting of the committee, but maybe the third.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Just as a quick question, then, since we will not, what would happen in our second meeting of the committee if we have no plans and we don't have a steering committee until next week?

The Chair: We would adopt the report of the steering committee or do something that we agree today to do.

Yes, Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: I think that Ms. Collins is right. We should have the environment commissioner. Those reports, there are a lot in them. I think this committee's first duty is to look at the work that has been done by the commissioner. I'm not opposed to our making that our second meeting, but we have had instances in other committees where the subcommittee met, and just with this in mind. Then perhaps the environment commissioner is aware that we wish to see him and to talk about those reports. Then it's just a matter of scheduling that second meeting.

I think we can have a subcommittee report where we start the business, as long as there is agreement from all parties that, in regard to the environment commissioner, because he will be waiting in the room for the adoption of that report, the expectation is that we wouldn't reject that report and then send him away. That would be a waste of time.

The Chair: Basically, you're saying—and I'll get to you, Mr. Longfield, in a moment—let's de facto accept this idea for the second meeting and put it more formally in a subcommittee report, which we would adopt as the first thing on the second meeting. Basically, we're voting on your motion for the second meeting.

Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I like the way the conversation is going, that the steering committee, which is actually the agenda and procedure committee, take a look at what we're going to be doing in the first meetings. I would like them to consider the water study that we were beginning and had done a lot of prep work on, and that it would be included in the priorities we look at for the upcoming meetings, and then get those scheduled in as well.

I think the group that will be getting together to look at our agenda needs to give us that report so that we can adopt it and follow the routine motions we've just adopted, and then have the commissioner in the wings. That would be, I think, a good way of economizing our time.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I want to specify that we are proposing today to consider Ms. Collins' motion at the first meeting of the subcommittee, which will take place next Tuesday at 11 o'clock.

Also, we agree that we are ready to receive the commissioner at our first meeting of the year 2022. We also agree to adopt the report of the steering committee before the commissioner appears at the committee. The adoption of this report will allow us to invite the commissioner to our second meeting.

If I understand correctly, we will vote on this proposal, and come to an agreement.

Mr. Albas, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think everyone is being very collaborative here, and, quite honestly, if we're going to do this, let's just pass the motion because then we don't have the—

The Chair: I'm fine with that if that's what you do.

Mr. Dan Albas: As long as Ms. Collins doesn't mind me just kind of just being like a bull in a China shop with her motion, then I think we should just do that so that everyone has certainty as to what we'll be doing first thing as a committee. The one thing I wanted to make absolutely clear, though, is that, regarding the routine motion that was passed in terms of witnesses, I believe that the environment commissioner would be treated somewhat akin to a government department. We're not going to be saying, "I want this assistant of the environment commissioner as a witness" because that's not the intent here. The intent here is to have the environment commissioner, and he can choose who he brings in.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Collins, would you agree to go ahead and move your motion before the subcommittee meets; then we can decide right away to invite the commissioner?

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Yes, I am. That sounds like a good path forward, and thanks to all of the committee.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Could you move your motion officially?

[*English*]

Just to repropose the motion—

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: We do have a copy.

The Chair: Okay, good.

Would you like to propose your motion formally, and then we'll vote on it? There seems to be unanimous consent here.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I move:

That, for the second meeting of the committee, the committee invite the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to provide a briefing on the office and role of the commissioner and the 2021 Fall Reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, and that the meeting be televised.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Congratulations on proposing the committee's first adopted motion of the 44th Parliament.

Madame Pauzé.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will move a motion that follows up on what was done in the previous Parliament. All my colleagues have received it on their P9. I will give a short history for those who were not on the committee before the election. The first motion we dealt with was on electric vehicles, a federal carbon-neutral law, and other things. We also dealt with infrastructure. Witnesses appeared for four days. We studied the report for three days, but not full time. There was unanimity. Before the election was called, there were three days left for the minister to respond. During this period, the elections were called. All that was missing were those three days. Today, I ask the committee to consider the motion I will read. It is the most appropriate one that we have from the information we received from the clerks. I remind you that it was unanimous. I will read it to you.

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of zero-emission vehicles; That the evidence and documentation received by the committee during the 2nd session of the 43rd Parliament on the subject be taken into consideration by the committee in the current session; That the committee adopt the report entitled “The Road Ahead: Encouraging the Production and Purchase of Zero-emission Vehicles in Canada”, adopted during the 2nd session of the 43rd Parliament and tabled in the House of Commons on April 13, 2021; That, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request the government to table a comprehensive response to the report.

It is a matter of picking up where the work left off on April 13. The 120 days ended three days after the election was called. So it's just a matter of going back and giving the minister a chance to respond to us on this again. In any case, it was an election commitment by all parties. There is an urgent need to act, because these laws are being prepared everywhere. Manufacturers are not stupid; they can build in Ontario and send their vehicles to the United States. But Canadians do not have access, because in the United States there are laws in certain states that prevent them from doing so. So I am motivated by the urgency of the situation.

• (1205)

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

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to offer my thanks to Madam Pauzé for bringing this forward. It was an excellent study, and I do think that it merits a response from the government. That's our way of making sure that the government is held accountable.

There is one question I would ask, Mr. Chair, and perhaps you can consult with the clerk. It's my understanding that we would need to have some sort of period for a dissenting report, whether or not any committee members want to submit. Maybe you could just check with the clerk whether that's the case.

The Chair: If I understand it, you want to reopen the report that we did in order to include a dissenting report.

Mr. Dan Albas: In any report that goes to the House of Commons, there's usually an opening for dissent. Whether a party chooses to do it...because it was an all-party—

The Chair: I'm trying to understand. I've never been through this process before of reintroducing a committee report.

Mr. Dan Albas: My understanding from consulting on our side is that, any time you have a new report that's going to the House of Commons, it's just fair play; it's due process.

The Chair: I understand. Did you already do a dissenting report on the last one?

Mr. Dan Albas: No, but again, I'm a stickler for details, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I understand the logic of it.

Mr. Dan Albas: If this does happen again, then we would just simply ask for that same opportunity.

The Chair: Okay.

The issue is this—and you'll correct me if I've misunderstood—Madame Pauzé would like to get a response to the committee's report, which makes a lot of sense, but to do so we have to basically readopt the report and retable it in the House, which I think everyone is in agreement with. Because we're tabling the report, essentially, it's treated like a new report. In fact, we could change the whole thing if we wanted to, presumably, but Mr. Albas is asking that we allow for dissenting reports. This would be an amendment to the motion. We would have to vote on the amendment to allow for a dissenting report.

That's what we're debating now, and that's what we're going to vote on. Do we want to allow parties to—

Mr. Dan Albas: Just before we begin, Mr. Chair, the concern that we have is that, if this is used in the future, that would be wavering the ability for any party to be able to have a dissenting report in it.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: It's 60 days after tabling in the House.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas: We're not planning on putting in our own dissenting report. It's more about the process that's being used.

The Chair: I thought you were planning on—

Mr. Dan Albas: No, that's not the case here.

The Chair: So this would—

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, I'm sorry.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Chair, my hand has been up for a little while.

• (1210)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Longfield. I apologize.

Go ahead.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: At the time that we write reports, we decide on whether there are going to be dissenting reports. There are timelines given for those. I think that's counted within the procedure of adopting reports. I think these issues are something that we could look at with the steering committee, in terms of what we're going to be doing and what studies. I've already mentioned the water study that we began in the previous Parliament, and I know that you can't tie the next Parliament with the work of the previous Parliament, but we had started something that was going to be very worthwhile, and my suggestion was that it be included in our list of studies. I would like to see it done first.

We're all going to have ones that we want to do first. Maybe that's something the steering committee can look at in setting the agenda for the upcoming session.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: You have the floor, Ms. Pauzé.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Normally I agree with Mr. Longfield, but not this time.

This is a report that was adopted unanimously, I repeat. The wording we chose is the most appropriate. On the 120-day deadline, the minister had three days left to give us his response. He could have given an answer more quickly. There were three days left before we received the official response from the minister, but then the election call came.

This is happening everywhere, in every country. Most countries have these kinds of laws, and most countries have more electric cars than we do here in Canada. Therefore, we are lagging behind.

I think we can table the report in the House of Commons. The 120-day period will begin and, if I am not mistaken, there is a 60-day period in which there could be a dissenting report, as Mr. Albas said.

So the idea is to table the report quickly. That way, the 120-day period starts and we can get the minister's response as soon as possible.

The Chair: The dissenting report must be prepared before the report is tabled.

I have a practical question for members of the committee.

Mr. Albas said that his party had no intention of submitting a dissenting report.

Ms. Pauzé, I assume you have no intention of doing so either.

[*English*]

Ms. Collins, is the NDP looking to submit a dissenting report to the report we adopted? I don't think so. I don't get that sense. I haven't had a signal that you wanted—

Ms. Laurel Collins: We are not intending to present a dissenting report. That said, the concern that I heard from Mr. Albas was that they don't want this to be used in the future.

Maybe, Mr. Chair, if you don't mind clarifying, my understanding of the standing rules is that there is a requirement right now for the time period for dissenting reports. We don't necessarily need an amendment. In any report that the committee is tabling, there would be an opportunity for this. Is that correct?

The Chair: Would the next question be, what kind of time limit do we want to give ourselves?

Mr. Dan Albas: The thing, I think, that we're arguing, Mr. Chair, is that we don't want that to happen—

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Chair, I think my hand was up first.

The Chair: Yes, sorry.

Go ahead, Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: A suggestion might be for us...and I'm sorry to interrupt, Dan. This virtual thing is challenging.

The Chair: It's very confusing.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Maybe the committee could write a memo to the minister to ask for a response to the report that was tabled in the previous Parliament, and give him 120 days or give him 60 days to respond. Could we do this in the form of a letter?

The Chair: Actually, that's not a bad idea, Madame Pauzé, because instead of giving the minister another 120 days, we write a letter and we say, "We're sure that your response is ready. Could you table it in the next 20 days?" or whatever number we want to come up with. Then, if that doesn't work, we can retable the committee report.

I don't know if it was Ms. Collins or Mr. Albas next.

Ms. Collins, is your hand up again, or is it from the previous time?

Ms. Laurel Collins: My hand is up, but I'm after Mr. Albas.

The Chair: After that, it's Madame Pauzé.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, again, even though that is a suggestion, it is outside the motion that is before us, so I think we have to dispose of the business that's at hand first. If it brings some comfort, maybe what I could do is see if it would be a friendly amendment to Madame Pauzé to simply add some language that any dissenting report would be required within the next 24 hours of adoption of this motion. That should give you enough time to be able to table it in the House.

• (1215)

The Chair: Again, that gives the government another 120 days, whereas if we send a letter, we say, "Look, give us your response to our report within the next 10 days," or whatever we want to come up with. If the government doesn't respond within 10 days, then we say we're going to retable the report with dissenting reports.

Mr. Dan Albas: Again, members could vote this motion down, I guess.

The Chair: I'm going to ask Madame Pauzé what she'd like to do.

[*Translation*]

Do you want us to retable the report with the possibility of including a dissenting report, and give the government 120 days to respond, or would you prefer that the committee send a letter to the minister asking him to respond within the next week, saying that if he doesn't respond, we will retable the report?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, I agree with Mr. Albas' proposal regarding the 24-hour period. Personally, I wanted the report to be tabled before Christmas.

The Chair: Perfect.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: So there are three days left if we count the 24-hour period.

The idea is that I want as many failsafes as possible—suspenders, belt and velcro. Let me explain: we table the report right away; the minister has 120 days to respond, but he is not obligated to use all of them.

The Chair: No.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: As we know, Ministers Wilkinson and Guilbeault talk to each other a lot.

The Chair: Okay, I've understood where you are going with this.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: You've understood my intent, good.

The Chair: Ms. Collins, you have the floor.

Mr. Duguid will be next.

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to kind of echo Madame Pauzé. I think it's important that we table this motion. With a letter, there's no requirement for the minister to respond. If we wanted to write a letter in addition to passing this motion, I don't think there's any harm in asking the minister to respond quicker, but it does seem like it's important to pass this motion. I think that, because there was an amendment proposed, we're probably on that portion, and I just wanted to speak in favour of the amendment.

The Chair: Mr. Duguid.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Chair, maybe it's because I'm new to the committee, but there are just a lot of things flying around. I'm a little confused. I wonder if it would be helpful to suspend for a few moments for some informal discussions so that we can make our way through this matter and make a final decision.

The Chair: We'll suspend for a couple of minutes.

• (1215) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1220)

The Chair: I'll resume the meeting.

Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: I was hoping the clerk would, first of all, let us know how quickly he would be able to turn this around if this motion were passed, because that may impact the amount of time we would need for a dissenting report.

Through you, Mr. Chair, I would ask the clerk to just clarify that.

The Chair: Could you clarify how long it would take to retable this report? I guess we would have to change the date on it. That's pretty much it.

The Clerk: We should be able to do it pretty quickly, to have it ready and then to table it by the end of the week at this point. It depends on the motion that you adopt for the timeline. We should be okay to have it ready for tabling.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay.

The Chair: Your amendment is that parties can submit dissenting reports within 24 hours.

Mr. Dan Albas: I would even say by the end of day today upon adoption, if Madame Pauzé is amenable to that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Dan Albas: The reason for this again, Mr. Chair, is that we want to establish that, if this gets used in the future, there is a peri-

od for dissenting reports. We don't plan on doing that. I just want to support Madame Pauzé as much as possible.

The Chair: Is that a friendly amendment?

The Clerk: It's considered a subamendment.

The Chair: We vote on that, and then we vote on—

The Clerk: I'm sorry. It's an amendment to the motion.

The Chair: We'll vote on the amendment, and then we'll vote on Madame Pauzé's motion. Is there anyone else?

Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: With this amendment my concern is that introducing a dissenting report on a report that's already been tabled is really effectively opening this study again. I think we're looking for the right way forward. I suggested a letter because I think we would get a faster response, or we could ask for a faster response. Madame Pauzé makes a good point that the minister doesn't have to wait 120 days and could give us a faster response, which gives some flexibility. If he needs the time he can use the time, but if he can do it faster it's better for us as a committee to get a response because there was good work done there.

I'm concerned that the amendment on the table would be counter to the way reports are normally handled. They're either tabled, or else, if you're going to do a dissenting report, you have to open up the study again so that we can see what's changed in the meantime. I wouldn't be supporting a dissenting report, but I would definitely support retabling the report as it is.

The Chair: Mr. Weiler.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: My concern with having the dissenting report is that we have a very different makeup of the committee now. Not all of the members of the committee have had the opportunity to have witnesses and be able to ask them questions. That's part of my concern with this.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Weiler.

Is there anyone else?

We'll go to Mr. Albas and then Madame Pauzé.

Mr. Dan Albas: Again, to explain, when a committee readopts a report, usually they have to go through a standard adoption motion including Standing Order 108(1)(b), which allows all parties to submit supplementary dissenting reports. My stake in this is just process, not product. The Conservatives will not be putting forward a dissenting report. If everyone just agrees with the idea that Madame Pauzé is putting forward today, please allow us just to put a little sticker for when it comes to due process, and let's vote on this amendment. Again it would be for the end of business day. I'm sure many of us have very great thoughts that we could quickly write down, but I really don't get the sense that's really what's intended here.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I thought we were heading for a formality. I think the reason the committee is passing this motion is because it is master of its motions. No matter what happened centuries ago in Parliament, that the report needed to be reopened, and so on, the committee is master of its decisions.

I just want to remind you that it was still a unanimous report. We spent months talking about it and we had many stakeholders. Also, it was an all-party commitment here during the election campaign. All the parties had it in their election platform. In addition, there was also the government's intention stated in the Speech from the Throne—not Governor General Simon's, but the previous one—to put forward zero-emission vehicles and the date of 2035 was mentioned.

We have no more time to waste. The industry needs predictability, so we must not put this off indefinitely. The sooner it's done, the sooner we can discuss legislation to do this and the sooner the industry will be able to pivot and be able to build vehicles here.

This report ensures that zero-emission vehicles built in Canada, often with funds from Canadian citizens, are available to people in Canada. However, this is not the case at present. So the report addresses all of that, infrastructure, and so on.

Those are my arguments, and I agree with Mr. Albas. regarding the time up to today; we can then table it by Thursday, in case the House does not sit on Friday.

● (1225)

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Albas, there are no other speakers. I would ask you to read your amendment again to make sure that we understand what we are voting on.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: It's that any party that wishes to submit a dissenting report must do so by end of business day, the day that this motion is adopted.

The Chair: I'm calling the vote on the amendment.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: There we go again, the environment committee working collaboratively.

Now we will vote on the main motion.

Mr. Dan Albas: Can we seek unanimous consent for passing it as amended?

The Chair: I think that's a good idea.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

Congratulations, Madame Pauzé. We will look forward to the government's response.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: We'll wait for it with anticipation, thank you.

I would like to take this opportunity to table another motion that we could consider. It's a motion that you all received. I think the clerk sent it to you. So it's a new motion regarding a study.

I will read it to you:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development undertake a study for a comprehensive review of nuclear waste governance in Canada and its impacts on the environment, including the issues raised by the import of these wastes and the trade in medical technologies; that the committee invite the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, the Minister of Natural Resources, representatives of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, experts, and other stakeholders; that the committee hold a minimum of five meetings and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

The Chair: There are three raised hands on the screen, but I don't know who was first.

Who has priority?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: You decide.

The Chair: The technology is supposed to put this in order.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I put my hand up last, so I'm third.

The Chair: Okay, so the technology is not doing that.

The Clerk: It's Mr. Longfield, then Mr. Weiler and then Ms. Collins.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Before I go to Mr. Longfield, I would like to ask Madame Pauzé. It's up to her, I guess. Rather than have a big debate today, can we not submit this to the steering committee and discuss it there and then come back?

Madame Pauzé is in agreement.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Yes, I am.

[*English*]

The Chair: I don't know if we need to go to Mr. Longfield, Mr. Weiler and Ms. Collins.

Does anyone...? No, okay.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I was going to suggest that any other motions that we have, including this one, go to the steering committee, and that we get those in writing to the steering committee so that they have something to discuss when they get together next Tuesday, if that's going to be the meeting date, and then they can report back.

● (1230)

The Chair: That sounds good to me.

Mr. Weiler and Ms. Collins, do you need to intervene?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to say thank you to Madame Pauzé for putting this forward. Also, we will be submitting a motion on fossil fuel subsidies and really looking forward to the subcommittee discussing all of them.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'd also like to thank Madame Pauzé for submitting this, and I agree with the method of going to the subcommittee.

Mr. Longfield had suggested that we refer any new motions to the subcommittee. As the subcommittee is actually a group of people, I think it would be better for us to submit them to the clerk, so that they go through the proper notice of motion and be registered and then sent to all committee members properly.

I'm not trolling Mr. Longfield. I'm just making sure the new members here know the process. If you want to table a motion, it should be through the clerk.

The Chair: What Mr. Albas is saying is that, yes, you send your motion to the steering committee, but you submit it to the clerk so that it's before the committee and ready to go if need be. Presumably that makes a lot of sense.

Okay, so that's what we'll do.

Mr. Dan Albas: I move to adjourn.

The Chair: Mr. Albas has moved a motion to adjourn.

I think there's unanimous consent, so we will adjourn.

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