



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 001

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Chair: Marie-France Lalonde



Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

• (1110)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Eric Glavin): Honourable members of the committee, welcome to the first meeting of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

I see a quorum.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(3)(a), as the clerk of the committee, I will preside over the elections of the chair and the vice-chairs.

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.

[Translation]

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.

[English]

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. Richards.

Blake Richards (Airdrie—Cochrane, CPC): I would move to nominate Marie-France Lalonde.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Blake Richards that Marie-France Lalonde be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions? I see none.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare Madame Lalonde duly elected as chair of the committee.

Voices: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

The Chair (Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.)): First, I want to thank Mr. Richards and all of you.

Thank you all for placing your trust in me today. I'm honoured to have this privilege.

I think that we can now proceed to the election of the vice-chairs.

The Clerk: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

I'm now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

[English]

Mr. Casey.

Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): I'd like to nominate the honourable member from Airdrie—Cochrane, Blake Richards, for the position of vice-chair of the veterans affairs committee.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Casey that Mr. Richards be elected as the first vice-chair of the committee. Are there any further motions? I see none.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare Mr. Richards duly elected as the first vice-chair of the committee.

Voices: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

• (1115)

[Translation]

I'm now prepared to receive motions for the second vice-chair.

Sean Casey: This is bound to come as a big surprise, but I would like to nominate Marie-Hélène Gaudreau, the member for Laurentides—Labelle.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Casey that Ms. Gaudreau be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Ms. Gaudreau duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

The Chair: I would like to congratulate our two vice-chairs and all the members of this committee, which plays a key role in the lives of a number of people. These people served our country, and they often come to share their stories and ask us to help them with some of the issues that they face.

[English]

Welcome to meeting number one of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

[Translation]

Before we begin, I would ask all in-person participants to read the guidelines written on the updated cards on the table. These measures are in place to help prevent audio and feedback incidents, and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters, whom I would like to thank.

You'll also notice a QR code on the card that links to a short awareness video.

[English]

I invite all of you to be very attentive to ensure the well-being of our interpreters.

[Translation]

Thank you in advance.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format.

[English]

I would like to remind participants of the following points.

[Translation]

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. Committee members, please raise your hand if you wish to speak. I'll do my best to stay on top of things.

[English]

To help me see—certainly, our clerk will help me—if you have comments that you would like to bring forward, please raise your hand.

[Translation]

The committee clerk and I will take care to keep track of the speaking order.

[English]

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

I hope you all had the chance to look at our routine motions. With the agreement of the committee, we can proceed to the consideration of the routine motions.

[Translation]

I know that the committee clerk has circulated a list of draft routine motions that were prepared by all the whips of the recognized parties.

As a reminder, a motion must be moved by a committee member. It's also easier to consider the routine motions one by one.

[English]

We'll do that if it's okay, and I have agreement.

The first one, I think, is very important. I'll invite a member to read the motion.

Go ahead, Ms. Hirtle.

Alana Hirtle (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

The first motion is about 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 it in its work.

(Motion agreed to)

● (1120)

[Translation]

The Chair: I would like to welcome the analyst, with whom we've all had the pleasure of working. We're extremely grateful to him.

[English]

For the next motion, I would like to invite Madame Auguste.

[Translation]

Tatiana Auguste (Terrebonne, Lib.): I move:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of four members; the chair and one member from each recognized party, as designated by each party's whip; and that the subcommittee work in a spirit of collaboration.

The Chair: Is everyone in favour of adopting the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mrs. Wagantall.

Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): What was interpreted was that it be composed of five members. Is it four members or five? It was possibly just the interpretation. I don't know.

[Translation]

The Chair: The subcommittee must be composed of four members.

[English]

Mr. Chen, you can read the next one.

Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): On meetings 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.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

The Chair: Good.

[English]

For the next one, we'll have Ms. Hirtle.

Alana Hirtle: On travel, I move:

That, when travelling outside the Parliamentary Precinct: (a) the meeting begin after 15 minutes, regardless of whether quorum is present; (b) no substantive motion may be moved during such meetings.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

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

Ms. Auguste, the floor is yours.

Tatiana Auguste: Concerning the time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses, I move:

That witnesses be given five (5) minutes for their opening statements; that whenever possible, witnesses provide the committee with their opening statements 72 hours in advance; that, at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated six (6) minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows:

First Round:

Conservative Party

Liberal Party

Bloc Québécois

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

Conservative Party, five (5) minutes

Liberal Party, five (5) minutes

Bloc Québécois, two and a half (2.5) minutes

Conservative Party, five (5) minutes

Liberal Party, five (5) minutes

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We'll now proceed to the next motion.

[English]

Shaun Chen: On document distribution, I move:

That only the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the committee and only when the documents are in both official languages; and that all documents submitted to the committee in both official languages that do not come from a federal department or members' offices, or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau, be sent for linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members, and that the witnesses be advised accordingly.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: For our next motion, we'll go to Ms. Hirtle.

Alana Hirtle: 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 subcommittees.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: It does say, "at the discretion of the Chair", so be ready. You may have a surprise this session.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

The Chair: I speak French and I like French cuisine.

Ms. Auguste, the floor is yours.

Tatiana Auguste: Concerning the 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 representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

• (1125)

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

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Chair: We'll go to the next motion.

Go ahead, Mr. Chen.

Shaun Chen: 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.

That, during in camera meetings, committee members may be informed by the committee Chair of the MPs who have been designated as substitutes for permanent members, in order to know which MPs are authorized to speak and vote during these committee meetings. That only those who have been recognized and identified as such be authorized to speak, in keeping with the usual agreed rules—

[Translation]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

My colleague is reading the motion too quickly and the interpreters don't have the same documents. It's necessary to either give them the documents or to speak more slowly, so that we can get an accurate interpretation.

The Chair: The documents were sent to them.

That said, Mr. Chen, please read the motion a bit more slowly, so that the interpreters can help us. Thank you.

Shaun Chen: I'm sorry if I spoke too fast.

[English]

The second part is:

That, during in camera meetings, committee members may be informed by the committee Chair of the MPs who have been designated as substitutes for permanent members, in order to know which MPs are authorized to speak—

The Chair: Just wait a second.

[Translation]

Sean Casey: Ms. Gaudreau, I sent you a copy of the document.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Yes. I received it.

The Chair: I can't hear anything. I don't have an earpiece.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: The interpreters have last year's version, Madam Chair. They don't have all the information.

The Chair: I apologize profusely to our interpreters, who don't have the latest version.

Interpreters, we'll send you the latest version, with our apologies.

[English]

Shaun Chen: 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.

That, during in camera meetings, committee members may be informed by the committee Chair of the MPs who have been designated as substitutes for permanent members, in order to know which MPs are authorized to speak and vote during these committee meetings. That only those who have been recognized and identified as such be authorized to speak, in keeping with the usual agreed rules of order and decorum.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1130)

The Chair: We would like to have the next one, please, Ms. Hirtle.

Alana Hirtle: Regarding transcripts of in camera meetings, I move:

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

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Auguste, we're listening.

Tatiana Auguste: Concerning the notices 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 p.m. from Monday to Thursday, and no later than 2:30 p.m. on 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.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Chair: For our next one, we will invite Mr. Chen.

Shaun Chen: 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

[Translation]

- (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)

The Chair: Congratulations on your French. Thank you.

We'll now proceed to the next motion.

[English]

Go ahead, Ms. Hirtle.

Alana Hirtle: 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 witness who did not perform the required technical tests.

(Motion agreed to)

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

Go ahead, Madame Auguste.

[Translation]

Tatiana Auguste: Concerning whips' access to digital binders, I move:

That the clerk of the committee be authorized to grant access to the committee's digital binder to the offices of the whips of each recognized party.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Chen.

Shaun Chen: On maintenance of order and decorum, I move:

That, during meetings, the Chair, if necessary, use his or her prerogative to suspend the meeting to maintain the order and decorum necessary to ensure the application of the House of Commons' policies on workplace health and safety.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

The Chair: Good. Thank you.

• (1135)

[English]

I know these are little housekeeping things, but they're important. They will set us and our agenda going forward.

Does the committee wish to discuss any further committee business?

Go ahead, Mr. Richards.

Blake Richards: Having had a chance to discuss a couple of motions with most of the members of the committee, there were a couple of members who mentioned to me....

I have two motions. One is related to the Persian Gulf War study, and the other one is related to the "Reforming Transition from Military to Civilian Life" report from the last Parliament. I was under the impression that neither of them had received a government response. Some members seem to believe that the transition to civilian life report had received a government response.

Can our analyst or clerk confirm that for us?

[Translation]

The Chair: Good question. We'll check.

[English]

Blake Richards: While you do that, I could move another one? We're certain that's the case.

The Chair: Yes. I think we agree on the Gulf War one.

Blake Richards: I move that, given the committee members, staff, the clerk, analysts and witnesses worked hard to produce the report entitled “The Persian Gulf War Was a War” during the first session of the 44th Parliament, and given that the government did not table a response because of the prorogation of Parliament, the committee deem that it has undertaken and completed a study on “The Persian Gulf War was a War” pursuant to Standing Order 108, and that it adopt that report as a report from this committee; pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request the government to table a comprehensive response to the report; supplementary or dissenting reports that accompanied the report in the previous session of Parliament should be tabled with the main report; and the chair present the report to the House.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Casey.

Sean Casey: I'd like to propose an amendment to the motion. The motion suggests that the reason for its not being tabled was that the government prorogued Parliament. I'm not convinced that is the case, given the lengthy filibuster that tied up the House in the last few months.

As opposed to trying to point fingers about whose fault it was that it wasn't tabled, I would simply ask that the reference to prorogation be deleted. We'd then be happy to support the motion.

The Chair: Is there any more debate on this?

Blake Richards: We'll consider that a friendly amendment. I believe that was the reason, but I'm not fussing over it. Let's consider it a friendly amendment. I'm fine with it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Richards.

I just want to make sure that we can share.... I think we have to share it in both official languages to each member, or is it okay?

We're going to be sharing this motion, and don't forget that we have a friendly amendment. Is everybody in agreement? Mr.

Richards said yes, but I need the consensus of all members to do the friendly amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: That's excellent. We will be sharing the original.

The Chair: I do have the answer. Indeed, it was not.

Go ahead, Mr. Richards.

Blake Richards: Okay. I would move the following. It would be a very similar motion:

That, given the committee members, staff, the clerk, analysts, and witnesses worked hard to produce the report entitled “Reforming Transition from Military to Civilian Life” during the first session of the 44th Parliament, and given that the government did not table a response, the committee deem that it has undertaken and completed a study on “Reforming Transition from Military to Civilian Life” pursuant to Standing Order 108, and that it adopt that report from this committee; pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request the government to table a comprehensive response to the report; supplementary or dissenting reports that accompanied the report in the previous session of Parliament be tabled with the main report; and the Chair present the report to the House.

It's in the same form as the other one. I did remove the portion that was not acceptable to the government members.

● (1140)

The Chair: Is there any discussion? Perfect.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Richards.

I'm not sure about you, but I would like to know if it's the pleasure of the committee to adjourn this meeting.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>