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# Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

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Chair: Terry Sheehan





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• (1630)

[*Translation*]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Malachie Azémar):** Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(3)(a), as clerk of the committee, I will preside over the election of the chair.

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of this person. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, cannot entertain points of order nor participate in debate.

[*English*]

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'm ready to receive motions for the chair.

[*Translation*]

**Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** I nominate Terry Sheehan, member of Parliament for the home of the Greyhounds, Sault Ste. Marie, as chair.

[*English*]

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Mr. Lemire that Mr. Sheehan be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

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

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Clerk:** I invite Mr. Sheehan to take the chair.

**The Chair (Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie—Algoma, Lib.)):** Thank you very much to my nominator.

Welcome, everyone, to the 45th Parliament's first INAN committee meeting to elect chairs and vice-chairs.

Thank you, Clerk, for going over the rules of this meeting.

Go ahead, Jaime.

**Jaime Battiste (Cape Breton—Canso—Antigonish, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I'd like to congratulate you on your role, and I'd like to nominate Jamie Schmale for a vice-chair.

**The Chair:** Do you accept, Jamie?

**Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC):** I do.

**The Chair:** Are we all in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare Mr. Schmale the first vice-chair.

**Jaime Battiste:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to nominate Sébastien Lemire for the second vice-chair.

**The Chair:** Sébastien, do you accept?

[*Translation*]

**Sébastien Lemire:** Yes.

[*English*]

*Meegwetch.*

**The Chair:** All right. All in favour...?

(Motion agreed to)

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

Mr. Clerk, we have another order of business. It's to adopt the routine proceedings and such. There are quite a few of them.

I know that other committees have adopted them on unanimous consent. Is that something I heard some people talking about?

**Jamie Schmale:** I so move.

**The Chair:** Jamie so moves, and I'm seeing nodding heads, so we do have unanimous consent to adopt those.

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

**The Chair:** Okay, I think that is all we had with regard to business. I don't think there is new business.

Oh, I'm sorry, Jamie. Go ahead.

• (1635)

**Jamie Schmale:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and congratulations on your appointment.

Thank you to everyone here. I look forward to working with you in the coming weeks and months.

There are a couple of things that we'd like to put on the agenda for discussion either today or later.

There were a couple of studies in the last Parliament that did not get completed. One was the taxation study. We had drafting instructions, but I don't think we got to the actual report.

There was also, of course, the procurement study that we had just finished towards the end. We'd like to, if it's the will of the committee, bring those forward or have those brought forward as we come back in September—or whenever we're back next—and go through them and finalize those two reports, if possible, if the committee agrees.

Then I'd like to, at some point before we adjourn, do a motion—or however the chair believes is best to do this—to create a study schedule so that we are all prepared when we come back in September.

How we did it in the past, Mr. Chair, was that each party had its own study to do, and we kind of went in a rotation. The topic didn't matter. It was up to the individual parties to choose that. Then we just rotated through.

I think that maybe we should deal with the first part first and then maybe get to the second part, if that works for you.

**The Chair:** Sure.

Because we're introducing some new ideas, we need a UC motion, especially to table.... That's not really the substance of the report. They've already been worked on or almost completed. Is that correct?

**Jamie Schmale:** Yes.

Do we have to bring a motion for the clerks, or did that get in the programming motion? They would have the answer.

**The Chair:** The analyst would like to make a comment.

Please take a seat at the table.

**Jamie Schmale:** I'm sorry. I should have prepped you that I was going to bring this up.

**The Chair:** They're at the end, as I suspected and as you mentioned. That is something we could entertain when we reconvene in the fall. It's very close, according to the analyst.

**Jamie Schmale:** Is it both studies, or just the procurement one?

**Brittany Collier (Committee Researcher):** Would you mind clarifying? The other study was...?

**Jamie Schmale:** One was the taxation study. It was on the excise tax, and others.

**Brittany Collier:** The committee held several meetings on that study and did not provide drafting instructions to the analysts.

**The Chair:** Is that something we can look at again in the fall?

**Jamie Schmale:** Okay.

**The Chair:** That's fair enough.

Go ahead, Brendan.

**Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.):** Could you clarify what you would anticipate being involved? Would the second one be just for drafting instructions, and the procurement study would be further...? Are you talking about further witnesses, etc., or—

**Jamie Schmale:** On the excise tax, I think it was just drafting instructions. In my mind, we had given drafting instructions, but clearly I was confusing it with another study.

I'd like to give drafting instructions to get that completed and taken care of.

On the procurement one, I believe we gave drafting instructions, but we didn't go much farther.

**Brendan Hanley:** Okay.

**Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Again, congratulations on being chair, and congratulations also to the vice-chairs who have just been elected.

Is it the plan to adjourn for the summer in a few minutes?

**The Chair:** Yes, this would be our final meeting until the session in the fall.

**Bob Zimmer:** I think that's unfortunate. I think Canadians saw us just get back to work, especially at INAN.

I've just spoken to the miners up in Yukon, and they're having significant mining issues around permitting in the federal government.

Nunavut still has the highest rate of core housing need in any province or territory. Approximately 49% of families in Nunavut are unable to affordably secure market housing, and 80% of families can't afford to purchase a single detached home in Nunavut.

In the Northwest Territories, the economy is in a significant downturn and going over a cliff. Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction are down 16%. Construction is down 43% and the energy sector is down 54%.

I would hope that when we got back to Ottawa—as we did, and we're having our first meeting—that we would continue through summer and get some of these significant issues addressed. I think it's unfortunate that this Liberal government wants to adjourn for the summer and go on holidays while these issues still exist.

• (1640)

**The Chair:** Jaime, go ahead.

**Jaime Battiste:** As much as I'd like to get into debate and discussion that get right into the mix of the work we have in store, I thought we had a really good practice the last time we opened up indigenous and northern affairs—not only for the new members, but for the clerks and the staff working around that.

We're going to be spending the next two to three years, potentially, talking about indigenous people in Canada, and many of us don't know the true history of indigenous peoples in this country. One of the amazing things we did last time was start this committee by making sure that we had a base understanding of indigenous history. We asked to do a session of cultural sensitivity training, like a KAIROS blanket exercise for all of the members, clerks and staff in camera at the very first meeting, so that before we start talking about the problems we have in our ridings, we ensure that we're doing it in a good and culturally sensitive way.

I thought that was a really strong way to start the committee and I would ask that we do it at our first meeting when we get back. I know I'm not going to table a motion now, because I have to give 48 hours' notice and we'd never put the chair in a position of having to rule on anything like that, but I just wanted, with the intention of my colleagues being there, to say I'm hoping we can start the first meeting in a good way with the cultural sensitivity training and the KAIROS blanket exercise. I'm asking that you give that some contemplation over the summer.

I'd be more than happy to talk with the vice-chairs and you, Mr. Chair, about how we can formulate what studies and motions we choose to move forward with, because I agree that we had a rotation. I would disagree that it didn't matter what the subject was. I think the subject had to be something that we all thought was important to indigenous people in Canada, and then we had a discussion on it.

I'd hate to ram through things that we don't have consensus on as things that are pressing for indigenous peoples in Canada. I think good dialogue on that can happen after we figure it out and do cultural sensitivity training.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I see Brendan and then Sébastien.

**Brendan Hanley:** Thank you.

I agree with Jaime. I also wanted to thank Mr. Zimmer for bringing up a number of really important issues for the north. I think there are no end of pressing issues for indigenous Canadians and and northerners alike.

I think we all hope for some rest and that we should take some rest over the summer when needed, but more importantly, I'm looking forward to really important conversations in my riding and around the north. We have Bill C-5. Important conversations are to take place about building Canada strong. In our own context in the Yukon, we'll have a new premier. We have an upcoming election. We'll have a new grand chief.

These are really important conversations that I look forward to having before we set ourselves up in a good way to have studies

that address some of the priority issues for northern and indigenous Canadians.

**The Chair:** Jamie and Jaime mentioned the subcommittee. That was part of the routine proceedings. We have a subcommittee that can deal with a lot of this conversation that we're having right now over the summer, but we can talk about things and start to get things going.

Sébastien is next, and then I see Jamie.

[Translation]

**Sébastien Lemire:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I encourage us to maintain the co-operative climate that we've fostered over the past few years, which is heavily inspired by indigenous peoples. With that in mind, I think we can consider that we're currently discussing committee business.

First, I support my colleague Mr. Battiste's idea of starting in the spirit of training. I think we can formally adopt that today.

Second, I'd like to put forward some other things to consider, since summer is starting. I think our analysts were eager for the prorogation to end and for the election to be held so that they could start working. There is work that could be done over the summer. I'm thinking specifically of the two studies proposed by Mr. Schmale, and I'd like to propose a third to be completed. I don't actually want us to do it over again and invite new witnesses, but the work that has already been done could be made into a report. The communities that appeared here shared their thoughts, and it's important for that to be made into a report.

There are two other topics on which I'd like work to be done over the summer so that we're ready when we return. If my colleagues agree, I invite us to do that work. If that needs to be debated, I'll give notice of a motion to that effect, and we can debate it in subcommittee or later on. If everyone agrees to work over the summer, I'd be delighted.

• (1645)

[English]

**The Chair:** If we're going to start bringing forward new motions, then we need 48 hours, because that would be substantive and wouldn't.... That certainly can be done, and we still can talk about it over the summer and how we're going to program everything into place as well.

I have Mr. Schmale and then Mr. Battiste.

**Jamie Schmale:** Chair, the first part I was going to talk about is the training. I think we're on side for that. If there is a way to get unanimous consent and get this rolling so that our analysts and the team have the chance over the summer to set everything up and get everything rolling rather than wasting time, it seems like everyone around the table is fine with that and that there is unanimous consent for that motion. Maybe we can do that.

**The Chair:** We'll try to get that done.

**Jamie Schmale:** Okay. I'll deal with that and I'll go on to my second thing.

**The Chair:** That is for the fall, at the first meeting after we come back. I believe that is what we were saying.

**Jamie Schmale:** That's perfect.

On the second part, Jaime, we did allow the rotation. The topics were decided upon by the individual parties. I know that you did disagree with that in the last Parliament, but unfortunately, we, the Bloc and the NDP all thought we should be able to choose our own topics. I guess it'll be up to the committee to decide if we do that again or not. Yes, we are prepared with some ideas, but again, we'll deal with that maybe when we get back.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Jaime, go ahead.

**Jaime Battiste:** I wonder if we can seek clarity from the clerks as to what we can do to get to some of these things that we didn't finish off in the last Parliament—like the reports—and what is possible for us to get done over the summer without getting into committee business or into any additional things that we have to do here through introducing motions. Is there anything we can do through the summer just to finish off some of the work that we've done in the past?

I'd like to ask the analysts to give us just a little bit of feedback as to what we can accomplish over the summer without having to reintroduce motions and get into any kind of business outside of what we're doing here.

**The Chair:** We're going to suspend just for a couple of minutes. They're requesting it.

Before we suspend, I think we're all saying the same thing, which is that we'll keep this work going. It might be a little more informal, but we have a subcommittee as well.

**Jaime Battiste:** Can I retract what I just said?

**The Chair:** You're retracting, so I think we're okay, then.

We're all in agreement that we're going to work over the summer on these ideas and thoughts and prioritize them and set the agenda for a great session coming forward.

I think I'm going to move to adjourn. I see nodding heads.

[Translation]

**Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Chair, if I may, before we adjourn, I'd like to give notice of three motions to propose studies to the committee.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm going to have to ask for a notice of motion.

Okay, go ahead.

[Translation]

**Sébastien Lemire:** Thank you very much.

The motions I'm putting on notice today will also be sent to you by email.

The first motion reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs undertake a comprehensive study on how the Government of Canada is fulfilling its legal and constitutional obligation to consult with First Nations, particularly in relation to natural resource development projects, infrastructure development and any project having an impact on the environment and Indigenous peoples' access to land, water and natural resources that may affect Indigenous rights;

That this study examine:

- a. the usual consultation mechanisms, best practices and challenges identified by the communities concerned, Indigenous law experts and federal government representatives;
- b. the impacts and/or encroachments on First Nations' Aboriginal rights and treaty rights that may arise from legislation aimed at building Canada and implementing projects of national interest; and
- c. the Government of Canada's interpretation of the concept of free, prior and informed consent and its moral obligations under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

That the committee hold a minimum of five hearings and invite witnesses, including First Nations leaders, academics, law practitioners, government representatives and any other persons deemed relevant;

That the following ministers be invited to testify for one hour each:

Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations;

Minister of Indigenous Services;

Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs and One Canadian Economy;

Minister of Environment and Climate Change; and Minister of Transport and Internal Trade.

That the committee report its findings to the House of Commons along with recommendations to strengthen the transparency, effectiveness and respectfulness of consultation processes.

The second motion for which I'm giving notice reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on issues related to Indigenous communities that do not have a land base or reserve lands; that the study examine how federal authorities can recognize and expedite processes; that the committee allocate at least four (4) meetings to this study; and that it report its findings and recommendations to the House.

The third motion I'm putting on notice is related to the point that Mr. Schmale raised. It concerns the study on barriers to indigenous economic development. The motion reads as follows:

That the committee resume its study on barriers to Indigenous economic development that it undertook during the first session of the 44th Parliament pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, November 19, 2024; that the evidence and documentation received by the committee during that study be taken into consideration by the committee in the current session; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

The idea is to add a section on pretendians to the report that was done.

I'd also like to point out that the Bloc Québécois proposed a motion at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs that may be of interest to the members of this committee. It concerns the breaches or errors that happened during the most recent election campaign. I'm thinking in particular of what happened in Nunavik, in the riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, where indigenous communities were unable to vote. I think that might be of interest to the members of this committee and to the people who follow our work.

Thank you for listening, Mr. Chair.

● (1650)

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

[*English*]

That's it. The meeting is going to be adjourned. I see nodding heads.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

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