



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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# Standing Committee on National Defence

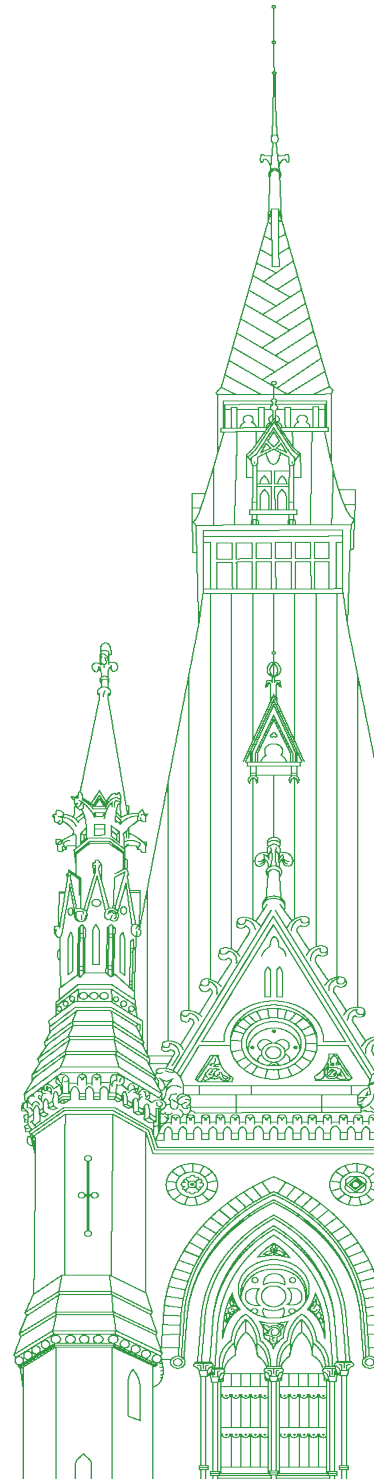
EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 001**

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

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Chair: Charles Sousa





## Standing Committee on National Defence

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

• (1535)

[Translation]

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

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

I must inform the members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk can't receive other types of motions, can't entertain points of order nor 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'm ready to receive motions for the chair.

[English]

Mr. Malette.

**Chris Malette (Bay of Quinte, Lib.):** Madam Clerk, I nominate MP Sousa.

**The Clerk:** It is moved by MP Malette that Mr. Sousa be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

[Translation]

I'll now put the motion to the committee.

It has been moved by Mr. Malette that Mr. Sousa be elected as chair of the committee. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

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

Mr. Sousa, I invite you to take the chair.

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

[English]

**The Chair (Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.)):** Thanks to all of you. It's great to be here.

I really appreciate all of you attending. There are members at this committee who have participated in this role before, and some who are new who have quite a bit of experience and understanding of

the file. That's very welcome in regard to what we're going to do going forward.

I'm also very encouraged by the intent of the committee and what collectively we, as government, want to do to support the Canadian Armed Forces by way of funding and engagement and by way of many recommendations made at this committee in the past. I congratulate all of you for all of your hard work. I am very much excited about collaborative, cordial engagement within this committee to move things forward, because I think we all share the same concerns. I've worked alongside many of you from both sides, and you are all good people. I look forward to working with you.

I think our next order of business is to elect a vice-chair so that we can get into the formal aspect of the committee.

I have Cheryl Gallant.

**Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC):** Yes. I'd like to nominate James Bezan for the official opposition for the position of vice-chair.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** It's unanimous.

James Bezan, welcome once again to the role of vice-chair.

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

**The Chair:** We will now receive nominations for second vice-chair.

Go ahead, Mr. Bezan.

**James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** I'm pleased to nominate, for second vice-chair, Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Congratulations, Simon. Thank you for being the second vice-chair.

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

**The Chair:** Welcome to meeting number one of the Standing Committee on National Defence.

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. You will all notice a QR code on the card, which links to a short awareness video.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, and I'd like to remind participants of the following points.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name.

Members, please raise your hand if you wish to speak. The clerk and I will do our utmost to maintain a consolidated speaking order. I will remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

With the agreement of the committee, we can proceed to the consideration of routine motions. You would have received these prior to today. There are a lot of motions there and quite a bit of reading to be done.

Go ahead, Mr. Bezan.

**James Bezan:** Based on the fact that our whips have negotiated this with all parties and it was agreed to be put in force for all committees, I move that we adopt the routine motions as presented.

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

**The Chair:** The analysts are nearby. Please join the table.

This brings the meeting pretty much to a close because we have put the motions forward and we now have our orders and procedures under way. We would normally adjourn at this point.

Mr. Bezan, I think you've shared something with us.

• (1540)

**James Bezan:** Mr. Chair, in the interest of everything that's going on in the national defence file—from the announcements of new spending, trying to meet the NATO 2% commitment, the announcement of the F-35 review and the AG report that we just saw on the F-35s—there is some work that we can start with.

I would like to move:

That the Minister and officials be invited to appear for two hours on the Main Estimates, referred to the committee on May 27, 2025, and Supplementary Estimates (A), referred to the committee on June 9, 2025, and that this meeting be televised.

**The Chair:** I think that motion requires 48 hours' notice. Is that right?

**James Bezan:** As we are talking about future business, we can bring forward any motion to do with future business. I think it would be prudent for us to talk about what work we want to get going on.

We have one day left this week when we can have the minister here. I've talked to the parliamentary secretary about availability. I'm sure she could inform us whether the minister is available or not.

I'd also suggest that we pass some motions to ensure that when we come back from our summer recess, we have an agenda that's ready to go. You can arrange witnesses with the assistance of the clerk and the analysts so that we can start our work and hit the ground running in the fall.

**The Chair:** Yes, Sherry, go ahead.

**Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have had a conversation with Mr. Bezan and checked with the minister, and unfortunately, he is not available this Thursday. I understand that this motion invites him, and he would love to come. It's just a question of finding a time that works.

**James Bezan:** That's fine.

**The Chair:** My impression is that we should be in camera at this point because we just passed.... I wanted to have an open discussion with our team.

[*Translation*]

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ):** Could we first receive the motions being discussed?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I have not received this motion.

**James Bezan:** We have copies of it.

**The Chair:** I have this one, which is what was distributed just now.

**James Bezan:** No. We have a file open.

**The Chair:** That's what I thought we were going to be talking about.

Are we okay to go into camera?

Go ahead, Sherry.

**Sherry Romanado:** We just passed routine motions, which clearly stated that any motion or notice of motion needs 48 hours' notice. We're not actually in committee business, but if it is the will of the committee to do so.... Normally for committee business, we would move in camera, but it's up to the will of the committee.

**The Chair:** I'm just trying to be respectful to the team in our first meeting. I want to be collaborative.

I understand the concern about having people be accessible. We are aware that we want to make the minister and others available to us. Unfortunately, they're not available right now, so that's going to be a bit of an issue, but I do want to collaborate.

Maybe there's other work that we know needs to be done, such as on threats and other issues before the country. We want to make sure the minister is available as soon as possible.

I'd like to go in camera and not publicize some of the discussions we're about to have, if that's okay.

**Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Chair, there is a motion on the table right now, which is the motion that Mr. Bezan just moved. We have to finish that motion.

**The Chair:** I'm trying to understand if the motion is eligible, given that we haven't had 48 hours. That's the point. We're not in committee business, right?

**James Bezan:** Do you want to move in camera?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**James Bezan:** Then what are we going to do?

**The Chair:** We're going to discuss things a bit more openly, I think, without being political and without playing "film studios". That's all I'm trying to get at. I want us to maintain decorum.

**James Bezan:** The practice of this committee has been to deal with motions in public, because we don't want to be behind a veil of secrecy. It's about trying to plan ahead for future business and allow Canadians to see how seriously we take our work here supporting the Canadian Armed Forces and dealing with the challenges that we have with national defence.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Yes, Simon, go ahead.

[Translation]

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** I don't know about the legal aspects. Personally, I would have preferred to receive the motions in advance, in order to be well prepared for this meeting with the minister.

[English]

**The Chair:** I think your point is we should be prepared to have the minister appear and, without having a prior opportunity to advise the minister, that is problematic.

The reason I'm suggesting we go in camera is that we're not in committee business. As a chair, I don't see this as being committee business, because we just passed routine motions saying you need 48 hours. I'm trying to be respectful to the members by having this dialogue, and I would like us to do this in camera, if everyone's in agreement.

**James Bezan:** You need a motion.

**The Chair:** Can someone put forward a motion to go in camera, please?

MP Malette moves that we go in camera.

This is a dilatory motion, so we will go straight into a vote.

[Translation]

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** I would just like to understand the purpose of the vote. Does the vote concern the motion or the proposal to go in camera?

[English]

**The Chair:** Can you repeat that, please?

[Translation]

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** I was wondering whether the vote concerned the motion or the proposal to go in camera, because everything happened quite quickly.

[English]

**The Chair:** It's a vote to proceed in camera.

(Motion negated: nays 5; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** The issue is we are not in committee business. I'm trying to make certain that we proceed accordingly and that we have 48 hours before motions.

**James Bezan:** Mr. Chair, I will put my motion on notice as I just read it in, and we'll make sure that we circulate it. This is your notice of motion so we can deal with this on Thursday:

That the Minister and officials be invited to appear for two hours on the Main Estimates, referred to the committee on May 27, 2025, and Supplementary Esti-

mates (A), referred to the committee on June 9, 2025, and that this meeting be televised.

That motion is on notice.

**The Chair:** That is understood.

[Translation]

**Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Will it be sent to us?

[English]

**James Bezan:** We shall circulate that motion.

**The Chair:** Yes, Ms. Gallant, go ahead.

**Cheryl Gallant:** Thank you.

I'd like to put a motion on notice:

That, given that committee members, staff, the clerk, analysts and witnesses worked hard to produce the report entitled "Gaps to Fill Housing and Other Needed Supports for Canadian Armed Forces Members and their Families" 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 "Gaps to Fill Housing and Other Needed Supports for Canadian Armed Forces Members and their Families" 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 be tabled with the main report; and the Chair present the report to the House.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bezan is next.

**James Bezan:** Mr. Chair, I want to give notice of motion regarding the transparency study that we worked on in the previous Parliament. We tabled that report in the House and a government response wasn't given. I table this:

That, given that committee members, staff, the clerk, analysts and witnesses worked hard to produce the report entitled "Rebuilding Trust: Transparency and Accountability in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces" 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 the study on "Rebuilding Trust: Transparency and Accountability in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces" 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 be tabled with the main report; and the Chair present the report to the House.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** Next is Ms. Gallant.

**Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Chair, I think you're going to like this notice of motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee conduct ongoing briefings from the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, Global Affairs Canada and other expert witnesses to receive information regarding the threat analysis affecting Canada and our allies, and the Canadian Armed Forces' operational readiness to meet those threats, including support for international security operations and emergent threats, as well as domestic capacity to respond in support of civil emergencies; and that matters related to logistics, procurement and personnel be included in these briefings.

**The Chair:** Mr. Anderson, go ahead.

**Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC):** I would like to give a notice of motion:

That the committee invite the Minister of National Defence and the Secretary of State (Defence Procurement) to appear before the committee for no less than 1 hour each, within 14 days of the adoption of this motion, in relation to their mandates and NATO defence spending.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bezan, please go ahead.

**James Bezan:** I have two more notices of motion. The next is:

That the committee invite the Auditor General to appear for no less than two hours to discuss the 2nd Report of the Auditor General, "Delivering Canada's Future Fighter Jet Capability".

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Kibble.

**Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Congratulations on your new position and thanks for the kind welcome.

I would like to put this motion on notice:

That the committee invite the Ombud for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces to appear in September for no less than two hours.

**The Chair:** Are there any further notices of motions before I adjourn?

**James Bezan:** I have just one clarification. We will have a Thursday committee meeting—

**The Chair:** That is not for certain; we have yet to find agreement with the whips. We may not have a Thursday meeting, but we appreciate the notice of motion, and we'll determine when the next meeting will be held.

**James Bezan:** Mr. Chair, I would just say that the House is sitting on Thursday; we are sitting right until Friday. I would hope that, as chair, you would want to make sure that we are working and being productive, knowing that this committee has not met since December.

It would be a great opportunity for all of us to get to know each other a little better by having a meeting and further discussing committee business, so that when we come back in the fall, we have an agenda and a plan moving forward to address the challenges we're facing and the threat environment we're currently experiencing.

**The Chair:** I would say that the members at this committee, the chair included, are very concerned about the threats and assessments as we go forward. There's a lot of work to be done, by all of us, to ensure that we encourage government to proceed in its mandate.

I am also sensitive about the resources, the availability of individuals, and some of those reports and motions that you've put forward. We'll do our utmost to try to achieve that. This committee needs to work for the benefit of Canadians, for the purposes of the Canadian Armed Forces, and that is my priority.

The meeting is adjourned.

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