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Chair: Kelly McCauley



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• (1105)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Marc-Olivier Girard): Hello and good morning, everyone, and honourable members of the committee.

I see a quorum right now.

Pursuant to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, as the clerk of the committee, I will now preside over the election of a committee chair.

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

Pursuant to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, the chair of this committee must be a member of the official opposition.

I am now ready to receive motions for the chair position.

Go ahead, Ms. Block.

Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

I would like to nominate Kelly McCauley.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. Block that Kelly McCauley be elected chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

I see none. Therefore, I will now put the motion to the committee.

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: It is agreed.

I declare the motion carried and Mr. Kelly McCauley duly elected chair of the committee.

We're going to proceed now with the election of the vice-chairs. We have two positions available.

The first vice-chair must be a member from the governing party, pursuant to the Standing Orders.

I'm now ready to receive motions to that effect.

[Translation]

Mr. Gasparro has the floor.

[English]

Vince Gasparro (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): I'd like to nominate Iqwinder Gaheer as first vice-chair.

The Clerk: Are there any further motions?

[Translation]

Since there aren't any, I'll put the motion to the vote.

It has been moved by Mr. Gasparro that Iqwinder Gaheer be elected as first vice-chair of the committee. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

[English]

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: The second vice-chair must be a member from the opposition but from a party other than the official opposition.

[Translation]

I'm ready to receive your motions.

Ms. Sudds has the floor.

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Kanata, Lib.): I nominate Marie-Hélène Gaudreau for the position of second vice-chair.

The Clerk: Are there any other nominations?

I'll now put the motion to the committee.

It has been moved by Ms. Sudds that Marie-Hélène Gaudreau be elected as second vice-chair of the committee. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

[English]

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: It is agreed and so carried.

[Translation]

I declare Marie-Hélène Gaudreau duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

I would like to congratulate everyone.

I'll now give the floor to the new chair, Mr. McCauley.

• (1110)

[English]

The Chair (Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC)): Thank you.

It is a pleasure, once again, to be with OGGO.

Just briefly, we'll try to make it short and get everyone back to House duty.

Before we start, I just want to welcome back MOG, our clerk. I had the pleasure of working with him for several years, and he's one of the most experienced clerks in the whole system, so we're very fortunate to have him.

Our two analysts, Olivier and Ryan, are at the back. We've had the pleasure of working with them also for several years. We're blessed. They're probably two of the best analysts, and he's the best clerk—no offence—in our system. We don't always tackle the easiest things in this committee, and they're always here to guide us. I'm very pleased to have the team back with us again.

In the last go-round, we were also blessed with wonderful members on our committee. Several are not coming back. They were not successful in the election. I just want to recognize them: Majid Jowhari, our former vice-chair, a wonderful gentleman; Irek Kusmierczyk; Julie Vignola from the Bloc; and Taylor Bachrach. They all contributed greatly to the committee. I think I express, for myself and for Ms. Block, who was with us last time around, how much they worked together—not always agreeing, but they did wonderful work. If you're at home watching, thank you very much for your contributions to OGGO.

Just quickly, there are a couple things that were left over from the last time, and I'm hoping we can get consent to just reinstate them, so to speak. One is that we finished the New York consul general report, but we did not get it to report stage to send to the House. I'm hoping we can have UC to reinstate that, so we can get it to report stage.

Hon. Jenna Sudds: Are routine motions happening prior to that?

The Chair: We can do that. I was going to get that out of the way first, but we can go right to routine motions. It's six of one, half a dozen of the other.

Everyone has received copies of the routine motions. They were sent out.

A couple have been added. One is similar to public accounts and other committees. We require officials to provide, in writing, promised documents or answers within 21 days. That's been added to our routine procedures. Second, for the estimates process, the committee had agreed that we require a CFO to accompany the minister to make sure that the deputy minister is there as well so that we have complete responses.

If we're fine with that, can we have UC to accept?

Go ahead, Madame Gaudreau.

[Translation]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Chair, I would like to find what you're talking about in the document. What section is it in?

[English]

The Chair: It was emailed out in two separate emails. The first was a two-pager containing the general ones that every committee is adopting. The second one was adding the two that we had adopted before—having CFOs attend and having the officials return promised documents or answers in writing within 21 days.

[Translation]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Chair, with all due respect, I also sit on another committee. I think that today we must adopt the routine motions negotiated with our House leaders. I'll vote against the items that we received and that aren't in the document.

I would like the House leaders to have a discussion, since it's a routine matter. You'll tell me that the committee is free to make its own choices. However, work remains to be done.

If an agreement is reached when the House returns in September, we can adopt them.

[English]

The Chair: Is that something we leave to the next meeting?

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Yes.

The Chair: Are you fine with that, everyone? Okay. That will give you time to look it over as well and discuss with your teams why we had passed it last time.

We'll proceed, then, with just the routine motions.

Do we have UC for that?

(Motions agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Perfect.

As for the two outstanding items, I'll ask the clerk to send them out again in September. They're on the 21 days and having the CFO attend.

There was another one. We didn't make it part of our routine procedures, but we did speak of it often when we had outside witnesses in. It was around a conflict of interest declaration. Again, we can leave that.

• (1115)

Vince Gasparro: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. Do you mind if I interrupt?

The Chair: Go ahead.

Vince Gasparro: I'm new to this. I apologize, everyone.

What is the process when we are voting? We just adopted the routine motions. Is that what just happened here?

The Chair: By unanimous consent, we adopted the typical routine motions that we all have in committee. There's another process whereby we actually go to a vote and ask the clerk to have a vote, or we do it on division.

Vince Gasparro: Okay.

Just for newbies like me who are learning—and I respect my senior colleagues on this committee—can we try to be clear when that is actually happening? Obviously, you're very experienced and you're able to roll through this, but for newbies like me, can we be clear and say that we'll be moving this motion?

Again, I apologize if it causes any delay.

The Chair: Sure. To be clear, we have adopted the routine motions. When we come back, we'll look at the 21 days as well as the request to have the CFOs attend. Quite often they do attend anyway, but we just wanted them to be there.

There are some briefing documents for today. I hadn't planned on going over them, but my esteemed clerk has suggested that perhaps the analysts want to go over them.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

Olivier Leblanc-Laurendeau (Committee Researcher): It won't take long.

I just want to explain the documents that the clerk sent out by email.

To set the record straight, the committee's analysts prepare briefing notes and work plans and suggest witnesses for our studies. They also prepare draft reports at the end of the studies and press releases when requested.

To keep things simple this morning, I'll give the floor to my colleague, Mr. van den Berg. He'll explain the main documents that we would recommend consulting from among the documents sent out.

[English]

Ryan van den Berg (Committee Researcher): I'll continue in English here quite briefly.

Given the volume of documents that we sent to your offices earlier on Monday through the clerk, we want to highlight a few of those for new members so that they can get acquainted with some of the subject matter of the committee.

First, we suggest that you might want to begin with “The Parliamentary Financial Cycle” publication, the working paper called “Frequently Asked Questions on the Financial Cycle and the Estimates Process” and the working paper called “Demystifying Federal Procurement”.

Those of you who are already more familiar with the estimates process may be interested to know more about estimates scrutiny by the numbers, which provides information on broad trends.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

I have a couple of quick housekeeping items. In the last session, we completed a report on the....

I'm sorry. Go ahead, Madame.

[Translation]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: You'll get to know me, Mr. Chair. Whenever the interpretation isn't working, I wave my hand.

Don't be shy, interpreters. You're doing an excellent job. You can let me know when the remarks are inaudible. This goes for both languages.

[English]

The Chair: One of the items that we need to finish off from last time is the report on the consul general's residence in New York. I seek consent that we re-establish the study, that the evidence received last session be deemed to have been received in this session and that instruction be given to our analysts to write the report so that we can actually get a report written and submitted to the House.

We'll have no more witnesses and no more time on it. It's just so that we can get it to the analysts to have it written so that we can report it to the House.

Hon. Jenna Sudds: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, I was not a member of this committee the last time around. I would suggest that we have work to get to. We have more emerging and pressing issues that are coming to light now. My preference—I don't want to speak for my colleagues—is that we focus on the future and move forward with more pressing issues.

• (1120)

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame.

[Translation]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: It's so important to avoid ignoring and abandoning the work done in the past. I'm new to this committee. If we can get a picture of the situation, something tangible.... In my opinion, this is done in every committee. I know that you, the analysts, are doing a wonderful job. We want to keep you busy this summer.

Mr. Chair, I think that we need a clear picture of the situation and of what has happened. We'll be looking to the future as of September.

[English]

The Chair: Thanks.

Go ahead, Ms. Block.

Kelly Block: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I will just add to the conversation that, as you've noted, we would not be inviting any more witnesses. The testimony is there. I think the analysts might not mind having a report to work on over the summer so that it could be presented to us in the fall. The length of time that it takes to review a report and adopt it I don't think would preclude our getting to other important business.

Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Jansen.

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): I think it's really disrespectful to Canadian taxpayers to spend all this time and money on a study and then not finalize it with a report. I think taxpayers would appreciate seeing an end result to the money that they've put into it.

The Chair: Well, I was hoping we could do it with unanimous consent, but we don't have unanimous consent. We can do it through a regular motion now or we can vote on it when get back in September and do it that way.

Kelly Block: Mr. Chair, I move that we bring forward the work on the consul general's condominium, that testimony, with the intention of doing a report and presenting it to the House.

The Chair: Ms. Jansen has a point. It's to get it started, to give directions to the analysts to start writing the report so that at least we can have it written over the summer.

Are we okay with that, colleagues?

We can go to a vote on it, Clerk.

We have a tie. I vote yes.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: I have another one, which is on the indigenous procurement. If you recall, or if you participated, we had many indigenous witnesses. Some elders and experts joined the meeting but were not able to participate. If you recall, we lost several because of Zoom issues, technical issues.

I'm hoping to get UC to re-establish that study so we can hear from the indigenous witnesses. We had someone from Yukon, I recall, and some were from, I think, McGill, or from Montreal.

For one of them, we tried three separate times to have him Zoom in, and three times we had technical issues, so I'm hoping we can have UC to re-establish those meetings, or that study, to continue that so we can hear from indigenous witnesses and experts who could not join because of our IT issues.

Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and congratulations on your election as chair.

As a new member to this committee, I'm not familiar with the proceedings before Parliament was prorogued. Were there a number of meetings set for this particular study?

• (1125)

The Chair: First of all, congratulations to you, but allow me to express my disappointment that you were not following OGGO religiously, as the public does.

There had been some meetings set aside, and then that time had to be extended a lot because of the continuing IT issues. We would set a meeting aside and people would join in, and then we could not get the interpretation because of IT issues.

Iqwinder Gaheer: Do we have an estimate on how many meetings we would like on this?

The Chair: I think it was three witnesses—so one or two.

We'd hear from the missing witnesses, and then you'd have time over the summer to review it. We're not saying to do it tomorrow or during the summer, but come September. It'll give you time over the summer to take a look at it, but it's to hear from those witnesses. We can commit to hearing from the ones we missed out on because of IT.

Go ahead, Ms. Sudds.

Hon. Jenna Sudds: Again, I was not on this committee previously, but I do seem to recall there was an indigenous procurement report tabled in the House in December. Am I right in assuming that it stemmed from this committee?

The Chair: It was not us.

Hon. Jenna Sudds: Okay.

The Chair: It was a report regarding the House motion that was more around some fraud issues, but it wasn't from the study itself.

Hon. Jenna Sudds: It appears to me, as I was just looking on the site, that there was a report tabled in December that came out of this committee.

I think the clerk is agreeing. I'm not crazy.

The Chair: There was the following, which was that the committee report to the House its recommendation that companies that engaged in fraud be barred from accessing contracts, and that a response be provided. That was more regarding fraud and not from the extended report.

Vince Gasparro: What was the report, more broadly? I apologize.

The Chair: It was about indigenous procurement, largely around.... Some of it was on the fraud; some came out of the Dalian and Coradix issue; some was on companies that were purporting to be indigenous but were not; and some was on PSPC's inability to actually honour the commitment of delivering business to indigenous set-asides.

If we want, we can make it around hearing from those indigenous.... We'll extend it to hear from the indigenous witnesses who could not participate and go from there. I'm not looking to do anything immediately, but just to re-establish it for September.

Hon. Jenna Sudds: Could I ask or suggest that perhaps the clerk could draft a briefing of what has been done to date and what's being asked to move forward, to build on, so that we can make an informed decision?

The Chair: Sure. We can do that and revisit it in September. Are we fine with that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: You guys are going to love this one.

We made a document request to Dalian and Coradix, and we discussed it greatly. It was much delayed because of translation and other issues. It is ready to distribute. It is many thousands of pages, and it was provided by the two companies in question, so there are items that are not redacted, including personal information.

We can distribute it to everyone, but I'm going to suggest that because it's not redacted and includes personal information, for the meantime we send it only to the P9s and not make it public. These would be sent out over the summer. I think it's close to 100,000 pages. It's many thousands of pages.

Again, they haven't provided it in redacted form. We did not ask for it in redacted form, and so, because there's private information—whether phone numbers or emails—I'm going to suggest that in the meantime or until we decide otherwise, it be distributed to just the P9s.

• (1130)

Hon. Jenna Sudds: Again, having no context of where this is coming from or not knowing the previous work on this issue, I'm not comfortable with having something sent to my P9 that contains personal, confidential information.

I would suggest again that the clerk can prepare a brief for us or get us into the loop of what has happened.

The Chair: The original motion was not written such as we can decide.... The motion was to table them with the committee. They are ready. What I'm suggesting is that we just limit them to the P9s for the present.

They are going to come out. The motion was that we'll send, depending on what we decide....

The motion was to provide them to the committee. I'm suggesting that because they're not redacted, and I'm not sure what personal information is in there, we would limit it to the P9s for now, and then we can decide from there if we wish to go more broadly, as is normally done.

Iqwinder Gaheer: Mr. Chair, isn't it the usual practice for members to review documents like this in camera?

The Chair: I'm not going to propose that we review 100,000 pages in camera.

I'm suggesting that they're coming out. My suggestion is they stay with the P9s until we may decide otherwise in September.

Vince Gasparro: Again I apologize, Mr. Chair, but is there a way for us to get some sort of briefing on what this is, on the context?

I like politics as much as anyone, but I didn't follow—

The Chair: You could read the blues from the meetings or ask the analysts, perhaps, to send you a brief.

Again, the motion called for the items to be delivered to the committee.

Vince Gasparro: Do the motions from the last Parliament carry over to this one?

The Chair: Yes. There were—

Pauline Rochefort (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Excuse me, but isn't the...?

Oh, they're discussing it. Okay.

The Chair: It was asked and it was committed and delivered, but it hadn't come to us just yet.

Pauline Rochefort: I am also a new member, sir. I'm sorry.

On that note, though, did the motion not die when Parliament ended, and is it not the issue then—

The Chair: It had already come to the clerk, and it had been kind of sitting during prorogation. If you wish....

I can't imagine any of us wanting to sit there through the summer and reading 100,000 pages on this. If it's this big an issue, I can have someone send a....

You can read the blues and see exactly what it is. I can have the motion sent to you, you can get a bit more context and we can follow up in September.

Go ahead, Madame Gaudreau.

[Translation]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I'll summarize the situation.

We were elected a number of weeks ago. We must do our homework, which involves going through everything that has been done. I may have known this before my colleagues. I was briefed by my former colleague, Mrs. Vignola, who isn't even a member of Parliament any more. Summer is a good time to review what has been done.

I would even vote in favour of resuming the unfinished work. We're talking about public funds, so this work matters. Since there are thousands of pages to read, it shouldn't be done here. We need to do it during our constituency weeks, so that we're ready in September.

We must also think about our future business. However, let's finish what we started in the last Parliament.

[English]

The Chair: Thanks.

I'll get to you, Mr. Patzer.

I'm conferring with the clerk. The items were delivered to the committee; they just hadn't been forwarded when prorogation happened. I can have our clerk explain why we can still access them.

I've heard from Ms. Gaudreau that she would like to see them over the summer. I think other colleagues would like to see them as well, and considerable expense has been put into translating these items.

Go ahead, Mr. Clerk.

• (1135)

The Clerk: Thank you, Chair.

All of this documentation is basically the response provided by the two firms in question, Dalian and Coradix, to the committee following the adoption by this committee of a series of motions for the production of papers. These motions were adopted, if my memory serves me well, in November and December of 2023.

Of course, the text of these motions can be found in the relevant minutes of the proceedings of these meetings. The committee, for instance, was sending for a copy of the contract that was signed between GC Strategies and the CBSA, the Canada Border Services Agency. The committee requested lots of documentation and information.

All this is to say that it took some time for these two companies to give a full response and provide full documentation to the committee. They did so in early 2024, last year, and as the committee chair just mentioned, it spent some time at the Translation Bureau throughout the last year, and we received it fully translated toward the end of last year, in 2024.

My team and I, the committee assistants, were aiming to send it to all committee members by mid-January of this year, but what happened, as you know, is that on January 6, a prorogation of Parliament occurred, and that basically brought everything to a halt, including that type of distribution.

Then—you know the story—there was a dissolution of Parliament and a general election was called. This documentation is still in the hopper of the committee, so this is why I was asking the committee's leadership to see if the committee wishes to receive that documentation and re-establish the study, because it has been in the hopper for a little while.

I hope this gives more context to the committee members.

The Chair: Sir, go ahead.

Vince Gasparro: Mr. Chair, first of all, thank you for the context. I appreciate it.

I'm not exactly sure it's realistic for a new committee member to read through hundreds of hours of blues to try to get an understanding of what is coming through—i.e., 100,000 pages of documentation.

I think a proper briefing is appropriate in this regard, and then we can make an informed decision, or have an informed vote, at least.

The Chair: I'll recognize Ms. Gaudreau and then Mr. Patzer.

[Translation]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Chair, two things are on the table right now. I'm all for a briefing and a summary of what has happened. This could indeed be done in September, in virtual mode. I totally agree with that.

However, we aren't in agreement and we may need to vote on this. In my opinion, we can't just abandon documents that have been pending since 2023. We can draw things out, but we need these documents.

You even said that we would receive them, but now things seem to have stalled. We could schedule a briefing for the people who need it. I would obviously be one of them. I need the documents in order to be ready in September.

[English]

The Chair: Thanks.

I was hoping to do that on unanimous consent, but that's obviously not going to happen. It would require a motion from the floor.

We can consider that a motion just to release them only to the P9s, as I'm suggesting, or to the general committee. I'll leave that to you.

[Translation]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I move that the documents from the last Parliament be sent only to our P9 account so that the committee members can consult them.

[English]

The Chair: These are the documents from the Dalian and Coradix motion.

[Translation]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Exactly.

[English]

The Chair: Thanks.

Again, to be clear, they'll just be sent to the P9s. They're not to be shared and they're to be kept confidential for the time being, until we decide otherwise.

I have Ms. Suds.

Hon. Jenna Suds: Thank you.

I have two questions.

One would be to ask—again, being new to this—whether there is an open study that we have on the table right now that these documents are feeding into.

Second, just to concur, I think a briefing would be super-helpful as we dig into this.

• (1140)

The Chair: Yes, there's an open study, but it was from the motion for these papers that were supposed to be delivered to the committee.

Yes, I'm sure a briefing can be provided by the analysts.

On Mr. Gasparro's comment about the blues, it's quite easy to find it from the blues. They can provide those specific meetings, but it might be easier to do a separate briefing for you if you wish.

Vince Gasparro: Maybe what we can do is have a written briefing sent at the same time as the documents are sent out so that we're not receiving 100,000 documents with absolutely zero context, which is ridiculous. It really is, you know....

The Chair: I have Ms. Jansen and then Ms. Rochefort.

Tamara Jansen: Yes, I'm new to OGGO as well, and I must admit that I wasn't watching OGGO, but I am fairly familiar with Dalian and Coradix just from the things we were hearing through the media. I mean, it's not terribly difficult to figure out what this is about, but I do expect that there's going to be a lot of work, and I'm excited to get started on that. I'm very thankful to the team for making sure that we continue to look at these very serious issues.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame Rochefort.

Pauline Rochefort: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

My colleague, Ms. Gaudreau, spoke earlier about going over what has been done. I'm trying to understand the process. I'm a new member of Parliament.

I suppose that, when a Parliament ends, so do certain things. How far back can we go? Could we go back 10 years, 8 years or 6 years? When does a study end?

I thought that the study was finished. I would like to understand the process. The normal course of action isn't clear to me.

[English]

The Chair: He just explained that.

Pauline Rochefort: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, but because I'm new, I did not quite understand. I'm hoping to maybe get additional details to have a better understanding, and I hope you'll be lenient here, given that I'm a new member.

The Chair: Do we have anyone else on the speaking list?

Go ahead, Mr. Patzer.

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): As a committee, we can obviously restart the work that ended in the last Parliament. I think that's what we're getting at here, and Ms. Gaudreau has said that it's in her interest, as well as the interest of Quebeckers and Canadians, to continue this study and to get to the bottom of the root cause of the fraud that was found out. That's what these documents relate to, and that's the study that we are looking to continue.

As a committee, we have the ability to do that. Because of the nature of the documents and the way they were received, as the clerk explained, yes, it's perfectly within our scope to do that. Yes, it means a lot of work for those of us who weren't on the committee before to get up to speed for this, but that's our role as parliamentarians. Sometimes there's a lot of work needed for us to catch up and get on top of things.

I remember this one time on the industry committee when we passed a motion on a Thursday. When we came back on Monday, we—the Conservatives—had worked over the weekend, and we were ready to go with motions and studies. A member from the opposite side was complaining about people working over the weekend. Well, I mean, as parliamentarians, yes, sometimes we have to work over the weekend.

We have a lot of work to do over the summer, and we're fortunate that we have the entire summer to be able to catch up on what this study is. I mean, could you imagine starting on Tuesday next week and having to jump into this? Thankfully, we have all summer to do this work. I'm excited to do this over the summer at home. That way, we begin in the fall with this committee, and I'll be tuned up and ready to roll.

Yes, it's a lot of work, but it's not out of the ordinary.

The Chair: To be clear, the motion is just to release the documents to us, to our P9s only.

Go ahead, Ms. Rochefort.

Pauline Rochefort: Thank you, Mr. Patzer.

This is simply to advise that I'm not afraid of hard work and I'm not afraid of working over the summer. There's no issue there at all, but I am concerned about process. Maybe it's my mistake, because I had not seen this item as part of the agenda for today's discussion, so maybe I'm not prepared.

I'd like to understand the process and at what point can we reopen things. I guess that's what I'm seeking to understand.

● (1145)

The Chair: I think we can reopen anything at any time.

This is just to distribute the documents; it's not to restart any study. I can have the clerk reiterate our ability, with the motion—

Pauline Rochefort: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That would be very helpful for me.

The Chair: It's almost moot, because the motion before us is to send out the documents.

Pauline Rochefort: Yes, I just want to make sure as I vote.... I want to be informed and I want to understand.

The Chair: You're not voting on the procedures. You're voting on just releasing the documents, as the motion says. Perhaps we can continue that, and then he can explain it to you off-line or separately.

We've gone past saying that we're going to send them out. Now there's an actual motion from the committee saying to release these. It's a separate thing altogether.

Pauline Rochefort: I understand. I understand here that the—

The Chair: I'm going to continue with the motion. Again, the motion is now being taken separately from what I asked for UC on. The motion before us is to release the documents to the P9s because they're not redacted and there may be personal things. It's for the committee; it's not to continue a study and not to reopen it, but to release the documents.

Vince Gasparro: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: I'm sorry. I have a speaking list.

I have Ms. Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I would like to speak to all the new committee members. I'm not a new parliamentarian, but I'm new to this committee.

The committee has the power to abandon a project or, on the contrary, to complete it.

The motion on the table is simply a guarantee that the documents won't end up in limbo and that we'll get on with the job.

In this case, we must cope with many delays, since the documents are hundreds of pages long. Obviously, for me, translation is key and can often take months. In this case, we should have completed this study. However, given the prorogation, we couldn't do anything before the election.

The motion isn't about what we'll do next, but rather about receiving documents in our P9 inbox. In September, we'll see whether this becomes a priority. At that point, we'll have had our briefing and time to carry out the full review. Like all of you, I'm planning to take a vacation. We'll be in a much better position to make a decision.

That said, Mr. Chair, I don't know whether people still want to speak on the matter. However, I invite my colleagues to vote on the motion if we don't obtain unanimous consent now.

[*English*]

The Chair: I have Ms. Block, Mr. Gasparro and then Ms. Rochefort.

Go ahead, Ms. Block.

Kelly Block: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

What I would add to this discussion is that by putting forward a motion that we receive these documents to our P9s only and keep them confidential, we're actually protecting the unredacted information that we received from Coradix and Dalian until such time that we determine what we want to do with the information that we've received.

I would just add that it may be useful to find out from the clerk what would happen if we didn't pass this motion. Where would these documents go if they were to be sent to the committee? We're trying to limit the distribution to members of Parliament only.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Gasparro.

Vince Gasparro: I'm sorry. I don't know the proper way of doing this.

Would the honourable member be willing to add into the motion that a written brief be included in the documents that are sent to us? The written briefing would come to our P9s with the 100,000 documents, or whatever the number is.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Chair, I hope that we'll often come up with friendly amendments.

If we add to my motion—

[*English*]

The Chair: Since we're somewhat casual today, we'll just consider it as done, if we're comfortable with that. We'll adopt it as you see it—which is to deliver the documents to P9s only, and the analysts will provide a briefing—just to move things along.

● (1150)

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: The interpreters are doing a great job.

There has been a proposal to make an amendment to my motion. I'll agree to it, if there's unanimous consent, so that we can be done with it, vote on it and then receive the documents. Obviously, we'll also need a briefing.

Will we add a date to say that we won't be receiving the briefing in September because you won't be ready? No. It must be done now.

If the analysts tell me that they can already give us the documents, I suggest that we proceed.

[*English*]

The Chair: The analysts can provide that.

Are we comfortable with that?

Pauline Rochefort: Just for the record, I am not comfortable with this, because I still do not understand the process necessarily. Why do we revisit documents?

I just want, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Ms. Rochefort, you're arguing something that I don't want to say is irrelevant, but it's not relevant to this motion. There was a very clear motion directing the documents to be delivered. If you're not comfortable with that, I don't know what to say about that. However, the motion is very clear. If we're fine, we can just move to a...

To be technical, there's an amendment, and we can vote on the amendment. However, I think we have consensus that we're fine with the motion as amended. We can vote on that or continue debate on it.

Why don't we just start with the amendment? Are we fine with the amendment?

Vince Gasparro: Are we going to have a recorded vote? Is this a recorded vote? How does that work, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: We have an amendment before us. We can vote on the amendment, or we can accept it with unanimous consent, which we seem to have.

I see nods all around, so unless someone disagrees with your amendment, we will go to the motion as amended, which is to provide the documents to the members' P9s only, to stay confidential, because there is stuff out there that we don't want shared.

Also, a briefing document is to be provided to the analysts and their staff separately.

Vince Gasparro: I would like a recorded vote—

The Chair: Do you want it on your amendment?

Vince Gasparro: —on the amended motion.

The Chair: Okay. We can get to that if we're ready for that.

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

The Chair: That's perfect.

I'm going to suggest that they will be delivered in different tranches. One tranche will be on SharePoint, to the P9s only. Those will be the documents. The analysts will deliver the briefing separately to everyone, meaning your staff.

Is that clear? The staff and the members will get the briefing; only members will get the documents on SharePoint. Those items are not to be shared with anyone, not with the whip's office. They're P9 only, and confidential until this committee decides otherwise. There's not just personal information, phone numbers and that sort of thing; there are also security clearance numbers and security information. That's why we're suggesting P9 only until we decide otherwise.

Are we clear on what the motion will be?

Vince Gasparro: Could you say it one more time for all of us?

The Chair: It's that the Dalian and Coradix documents, as from the original motion, will be delivered to the members' P9s only, to stay confidential. They'll be sent to the members only, and to no one else besides the members. Then a briefing document will be provided by the analysts in a separate email to everyone, including associates and staff members. It will be in a separate email. The Dalian and Coradix documents will be sent only to the P9s, and they have to stay confidential. They're not to be shared with staff or with anyone. It will be to P9s only.

Mr. Gaheer, is this on the motion?

Iqwinder Gaheer: Yes, I'll speak on that motion.

Mr. Chair, I was on the INDU committee before Parliament prorogued, and the clerk as well. When any sensitive documents came to that committee, we generally reviewed them in camera.

The Chair: We're not....

I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Iqwinder Gaheer: No, no, that's fine. I'm just making a point.

There was a particular room that was set aside and a particular time that was set aside for individuals to go and review those documents. That was for the most confidential types of documents. Not having been on this committee before, I sense that these documents are pretty sensitive in nature as well, based on the discussion that we've had so far.

Is there any sort of penalty for a leak of these documents from a P9?

• (1155)

The Chair: In this committee, we've distributed private, confidential stuff before. The only time I've seen it done in a separate room was VAC's documents for public accounts, and then also for the battery study. No, we just send out....

In the case of leaks, there are privilege issues.

Are we back to debating the amended motion?

Pauline Rochefort: It's a question, actually.

The Chair: You wish to go on.

I'm starting a speaking list now on the amended motion. It's on the amended motion.

Pauline Rochefort: If there is a leak—

The Chair: This is not on the amended motion.

Pauline Rochefort: If there is a leak of the amended motion, is there a penalty—

The Chair: This is not a question of debate on the amended motion.

I don't want to be difficult, but questions of what-ifs are not part of the motion or the amended motion.

Can we get to the vote on the amended motion? We can get to debate on the amended motion, but we can't get into procedural what-ifs.

Iqwinder Gaheer: Chair, generally, in previous committees, we were usually allowed to ask for points of clarification. I'm looking to the clerk because she was my clerk in the industry committee.

The Chair: She's not our clerk. Our clerk is here.

Not to be pissy, but questions of the clerk should come through the chair. I'm not sure what your question is or what the issue is.

Iqwinder Gaheer: My question is whether we are allowed to ask for points of clarification.

The Chair: Is that on the motion?

Iqwinder Gaheer: It's on the motion as amended, before the vote is called.

The Chair: I'm not sure what your question is, but go ahead.

The motion is very clear that the items will be delivered by an email to your P9.

Iqwinder Gaheer: The question that was asked by my colleague and by me is if there is a penalty that's involved—

The Chair: It has nothing to do with the motion, sir. I don't understand.

There are privilege issues. If, for the sake of argument, I take the information and distribute it, it could be a privilege issue that would be reported it to the House. That's irrelevant to the motion itself. We assume MPs will be honourable. There are privilege issues if it is leaked.

Iqwinder Gaheer: That's it. That's all I wanted to ask.

The Chair: Is there anything on the amended motion itself?

Just quickly, has everyone here received SharePoint links in emails?

The clerk was just saying that it can't be forwarded. For example, I can't forward it to Olivier for him to open it. It can only be accessed through the parliamentary link. It's pretty tough, unless you want to do screen captures, I guess.

We'll go to the vote on the amended motion, and then I think Ms. Block had something. Then I just wanted to say a quick thanks to someone else after I forgot to do that earlier.

To be clear, everyone will get the link on their P9—not you, Mr. Gill, I'm afraid—to the Coradix and Dalian papers, and then, separately, you'll get a shareable briefing from the analysts.

We'll have a recorded vote.

The Clerk: We have four yeas and four nays.

The Chair: We have a tie, so as it was the will of the committee in the original motion, I vote yes.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Ms. Block, you had something. Then I just want to say a couple of things and thank someone else whom I forgot to thank.

Kelly Block: Thank you, Chair.

Given that we've been talking about past studies and how to deal with studies that we didn't write a report for, we did have a study entitled "Postal Service in Canada's Rural and Remote Communities" that we finished up in the last Parliament. It was reported to the House. We had asked for a response from government and we never received that response.

Quite frankly, it was a very informative study that we undertook. Everyone around the table was very engaged. It had been introduced by Taylor Bachrach, who is a former member of this committee who is no longer at the table. My motion is that we ask the government to respond to that study.

I'll read a motion into the record, if I could.

• (1200)

The Chair: Let me clarify something. You're just looking for the response—

Kelly Block: A response from the government.

The Chair: —from the House that was originally going to be delivered, until the prorogation.

Kelly Block: Yes, that's right.

The Chair: Thanks. Go ahead.

Kelly Block: I move:

That, given that committee members, staff, the clerk, analysts and witnesses worked very hard to produce the report entitled 'Canada's Postal Service: A Lifeline for Rural and Remote Communities' during the 44th Parliament, and given that the government did not table a response due to the prorogation of Parliament, the committee deem that it has undertaken and completed a study on Canada's postal service using the title 'A Lifeline for Rural and Remote Communities', pursuant to Standing Order 108; and that it adopt that report as a report from this committee;

That, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request the government to table a comprehensive response to the report and supplementary or dissenting reports that accompanied the report in the previous session of Parliament tabled with the main report; and that the chair present the report to the House.

The Chair: Colleagues, I think this was actually a Liberal-NDP study. It was on rural post offices. It was done, and there are no other witnesses and no other report. The motion is just to table it to get a response from the House.

The clerk is telling me that it was tabled in December. Normally, when we table a report, we get a response back in, I think, 180 days or 90 days. I can't recall. I think you're just asking for it to be—

Kelly Block: It's for a response.

The Chair: Yes. Nothing changes. It's just the response, which is probably already done. You're asking that the response be tabled.

Are we fine with that, colleagues?

Go ahead, Ms. Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: We received the motion. That said, I need time not only to read it, but also to understand it. I didn't see it beforehand.

Since I just received it, I'm really not ready to vote on it.

[English]

The Chair: Do you require a couple of minutes?

Again, it's not to do anything or change anything in the report. We didn't receive the response back from the government on the report; that's all we're looking to receive from it.

[Translation]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Chair, I needed to read the text of the motion. I just read it and I agree with it.

[English]

Pauline Rochefort: Maybe this is not the proper setting to ask this question, but from a process perspective, do motions typically come in writing before a meeting, or does this regularly occur? It's just a follow-up—

The Chair: When we're in committee business like this, it can be from the floor. Otherwise, it's two days' notice, by four o'clock.

Pauline Rochefort: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Generally, it's half-and-half, depending on what's going on.

We're just looking for an answer from the government, which I think it already has. Are we fine with that?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mrs. Block, and then I'll....

Kelly Block: No. I've finished with that. Thank you.

The Chair: That's wonderful.

Before we rise, thank you, everyone. I look forward to working with everyone. We'll be a bit more organized, although we keep things pretty informal in this committee.

Technically, you can't do friendly amendments, but when we have general consensus, we will, in order to keep things friendly and keep things moving quickly.

I forgot to thank a special person who is a very good friend of the committee. I was watching Senate finance committee, because I don't have a life, and they put through a motion praising Mr. Giroux, the Parliamentary Budget Officer. They endorsed renewing his mandate as the PBO, because it expires on September 2. We're not going to get an opportunity to see Mr. Giroux come in before then, so I wanted to thank him on behalf of the committee for all his work.

I jokingly teased that George Martin was the fifth member of The Beatles and Mr. Giroux was the 12th member of OGGO. He was always available to us. Sometimes we called him with only a couple of hours' notice to appear at the committee. I saw him spar with every member of this committee, whether Liberal, Bloc, NDP or Conservative. I certainly didn't always agree with his analyses, but I always thought they were very thorough, very non-partisan and very straightforward.

Mr. Giroux, if you're watching, because I know you watch OGGO—who doesn't?—thank you very much from the committee. You're a fantastic friend of the committee. I appreciate all the work you've done for us.

Go ahead, Mrs. Block.

● (1205)

Kelly Block: Mr. Chair, would it be in order for us as a committee to also propose that his term be renewed? Would it take a motion to do that?

I agree with your assessment. I think we would benefit very much from his expertise. Given that the Senate has already passed a motion, could I put a motion forward today that the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates request the renewal of the Parliamentary Budget Officer?

The Chair: It's a recommendation. Is it just to follow the one from the Senate?

Kelly Block: Yes.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Kelly Block: I guess what I would suggest is that the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates recommend the renewal of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's mandate upon its expiration, ensuring the continued provision of independent financial analysis and reports to this House.

The Chair: Thank you. I understand that it's just a recommendation. Unfortunately, they're not binding, although I think everything out of OGGO should be binding.

Go ahead, Ms. Gaudreau.

[Translation]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I couldn't agree more. Mrs. Vignola and all my colleagues who worked with Mr. Giroux appreciated the competence, professionalism and thoroughness of his work.

I think that it's a good idea to recommend that he serve another seven-year term if I'm not mistaken.

I'm really pleased that the committee has made this recommendation.

[English]

The Chair: I have Ms. Jansen and then Mr. Gaheer.

Tamara Jansen: I was incredibly thankful for the PBO. I was able to call him to my office, and he came with his team. We were able to go over some things at the very beginning of my time here so that I'd be better prepared to speak with the finance minister. He and his team did fantastic work. I definitely would love to see him continue.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Gaheer.

Iqwinder Gaheer: Thank you, Chair.

I echo the sentiment that the PBO does a great job. I respect them greatly.

Wouldn't it be highly inappropriate, though, for a committee to be presenting such a recommendation for an agent of Parliament when there is a bit of an arm's-length relationship? We can say that we commend them and thank them for their work, but I don't think that there's precedent for a recommendation from the committee.

The Chair: Committees are their own bosses, so to speak. If it's the will of the committee, yes, we can. There's nothing inappropriate about it. I don't know if we can use their wording, but the Senate finance committee did the identical thing. Again, it's not binding; it's just a recommendation, an expression of opinion.

Go ahead, Ms. Rochefort.

Pauline Rochefort: Could I recommend putting forward a motion that would suggest that we just recognize his good work and provide words of appreciation?

I'm not sure if there was a motion. I think you had put forward a motion—

The Chair: We're debating the motion itself.

Pauline Rochefort: It's still the word itself, “recommend”, that I'm uncomfortable with. I think our duty is to acknowledge the good work and put forward words that recognize that good work but not necessarily recommend the renewal of his contract.

• (1210)

The Chair: Okay.

Call the vote, sir.

Iqwinder Gaheer: Do we have the text of the motion? I know that the vote has been called.

The Chair: We will suspend for a moment.

• (1210)

(Pause)

• (1210)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

We're back in and we're on the vote, Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: We have four yeas and four nays.

The Chair: There is a tie vote. I vote yes.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5, nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Colleagues, thanks very much. I'm sorry it took a bit longer than I thought, but I appreciate some of the housekeeping clear-up.

We'll meet with Mr. Gaheer, Mrs. Block and Ms. Gaudreau by Zoom or whatever sometime over the coming months to try to flesh things out, but things change pretty quickly, so who knows what our priority is going to be come September?

Unless there is some emergency, I don't foresee our seeing each other in the summer, unlike last summer. I look forward to working with everyone. I appreciate everyone's help in getting through today.

Welcome to all of the new members and our new vice-chairs. I look forward to working with you as much as I did working with Mr. Jowhari and Mrs. Vignola.

Thank you very much, everyone.

We are adjourned.

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