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CANADA

# **Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, October 29, 2013**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault**



## Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

Tuesday, October 29, 2013

• (1530)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP)):** Good afternoon, everyone. We will now begin our second meeting.

The first item on the agenda is committee business—so routine motions—followed by the planning of our future agenda.

We will go to routine motions right away.

Mr. Martin, do you want to take the floor?

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I wanted to ask for the floor briefly to properly congratulate you and welcome you to the new role of chairman that you've assumed for government operations.

I had the honour of chairing this committee for a couple of years and found it to be one of the more well-functioning and congenial committees that I can remember sitting on. There's some continuity on the government-side members as well here. I think they can attest that we were quite proud of not only the tone and the conduct of the committee, but also some of the quality work that we managed to produce in that time.

So it's in that spirit, Mr. Chair, that while I have the floor I have a motion to suggest under the heading of routine motions that would facilitate that type of tone for the committee as we go forward.

If you don't mind, I'll read the motion to you. I can then submit a copy to you to circulate to the other committee members. The motion is:

That the Committee may meet *in camera* only for the purpose of discussing:

- a) wages, salaries or other employee benefits;
- b) contracts and contract negotiations;
- c) labour relations and personnel matters;
- d) draft reports;
- e) briefings concerning national security; and

That all votes taken *in camera* should be recorded in the Minutes of Proceedings, including how each member voted when recorded votes are requested.

If you find that motion in order, Mr. Chair, and as we're under routine motions, I would like the opportunity to speak to the motion to explain some of the rationale.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** I think the motion is in order. However, you need to choose where in the order of routine motions you want to insert it—

perhaps at the end, or at the beginning. But we can make that decision later.

For the time being, since the motion is in order, we can move on to the debate.

My understanding was that you wanted to take the floor. So go ahead.

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Yes, I would, simply to introduce the debate, Mr. Chairman. As you say, it's irrelevant to me where in the order of routine motions this would find itself, should it succeed.

The reason I felt compelled to introduce this motion today, Mr. Chairman, is that it has come to my attention, through careful observation over the last three or four years, that there's been a gradual diminishing and deterioration of the conventional ways in which we've conducted ourselves, both in the House and in committee.

Notwithstanding what happens in the House of Commons, House of Commons standing committees were for a long time maybe the last bastion of some semblance of inter-party, non-partisan cooperation. Members of Parliament left their political baggage at the door, if you will, when they came into a parliamentary committee and we conducted ourselves in such a way that we were acting in the best interests of the country and in the best interests of making the best legislation that we possibly could.

That notion finds its origins in the premise that no one has a monopoly on good ideas. All of us, as members of Parliament, whether we're on government side or on opposition side, have a contribution to make on behalf of the people we represent, and that many bills that come before the House of Commons benefit not only from robust analysis and debate in the House of Commons, but also benefit from the amendments made at parliamentary committees. In fact, you could even point out, and it's worth putting on the record, that the opposition members in this particular Parliament represent more Canadians than the government side represents. We represent the majority of Canadians, if you will, in that the majority government, as legitimate as it is, won with 39% of the vote.

It's offensive to the sensibilities of anyone who calls themselves a democrat to deny the opportunity for those of us who represent Canadians who did not vote for the Conservative government, and by extension did not give a mandate to a certain legislative agenda to the Conservative government, to have their legitimate concerns heard and, in fact, debated and voted on in public—not in camera, in public.

I've been here for 16 years. I was a member of Parliament during Liberal majority governments. I was a member of Parliament during Liberal minority governments. I was here during a Conservative minority government. And now I represent my constituency here in a Conservative majority government. I can tell you, it was never this way.

I don't want ordinary Canadians to think this is the new normal, that parliamentary committees go slamming behind the shroud of secrecy every time anything of any controversy comes up and, in fact, not even when anything controversial comes up. Whenever it's convenient for the government side to go behind closed doors, they invoke the in camera rule which, as you know as an experienced chairman, Mr. Chairman, is non-debatable. As soon as a member on the other side doesn't like the tone or doesn't like the content of what's being said by a member on the opposition side, they get the floor, they move the in camera rule, everyone has to leave the room, the cameras get turned off, and whatever else happens is done in complete secrecy.

There's simply no justification for secrecy to be the default position of a standing committee of the House of Commons, yet that's become gradually, incrementally, the norm. I won't say the accepted norm, because those of us on this side of the benches do not accept it as desirable or normal. In fact, we will do all we can to try and turn this back to the way it used to be, to the more conservative approach where openness is the default position, not secrecy.

Mr. Chairman, it's more in sadness than in anger that I have to move this motion today.

● (1535)

In my tenure as a member of Parliament, and remembering back to those times when it was a Liberal majority government—and I'm not trying to blow any smoke up the kilt of the Liberals here—I'm just saying that I used to be the lone member, the lone NDP member, sitting where Gerry is sitting now. I would sometimes—not always, and maybe not often—but sometimes I would move an amendment to a piece of legislation, and if that amendment had merits, and I could defend the idea, it would succeed. But I think you're aware that not a single amendment to a single piece of legislation has been allowed in the entire 41st Parliament. Not one.

Is it possible that one party has a monopoly on everything that's good and true, and the rest of us, who represent the majority of Canadians, don't have a single idea of any merit whatsoever? I don't think anyone here would try to maintain that position. Why, then, is it impossible to get an amendment through and why, then, does every debate and every issue of any substance have to go behind closed doors?

Now I may, in fact, add one thing to this motion that I recommended here today, if that would be in order. I may wait until others have spoken. There's an argument for allowing one more category where I believe it would be justifiable to go in camera, and that would be for technical briefings.

There are times when this committee or others invite Treasury Board Secretariat officials to give us an explanation or to have a Q and A, if you will, for committee members. Nobody wants to look dumb on television, so we should be free to ask the simplest of

questions. For that example of Treasury Board officials, perhaps it would be justified to go in camera when we have one of these tutorials, one of these educational sessions with officials from Treasury Board or any of the agencies or institutions that report to this committee. I'd certainly entertain that as a friendly amendment or be inclined to argue the same point myself.

But you can see the purpose of my intervention here today, Mr. Chairman. Things have changed very dramatically since the Conservatives won their majority government. Never, never before in the history of Parliament have we seen omnibus bills, for instance, used the way they are today. It used to be that when there was a piece of legislation that had consequential impact on other pieces of legislation, you'd cluster those together into one bill. Essentially, it was the same point you were trying to make, it was just spread over a number of different departmental jurisdictions. That was the accepted usage that you'd find in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, whether it's O'Brien and Bosc or Marleau or going back throughout the years. Now we have omnibus bills that include everything and the kitchen sink thrown all together, with no opportunity to give a thorough, robust analysis, due diligence, or debate on any one of the important things that come up in there, and then they'll move closure.

Again, I don't want anybody in Canada to ever think that it's normal. That is not normal. It's an affront to everything good and decent about our Westminster parliamentary system, but yet it's imposed on us again and again. By extension, that same omnibus piece of legislation, which may seek to amend 70 pieces of legislation at once, comes before parliamentary committees with very, very limited opportunity for witnesses. Then, any time it gets even remotely controversial or an opposition member tries to do their obligation to scrutinize and examine it in any thorough way, down comes the black shroud of secrecy again, and we're forced to work behind closed doors. Not only are we forced to conduct our business behind closed doors, but we're never allowed to talk about it again or we'd find ourselves called before the bar and facing sanctions from the Speaker for violating the in camera rule.

So if you have any respect at all for the in camera rule, you should be one of those people who opposes abusing that rule for their own self-interest, Mr. Chairman.

● (1540)

I'm optimistic that enough fellow members of the committee agree that the in camera rule should be used as an exception, not as a rule, in rare circumstances where we can justify it and defend it. I've listed five here and I'm open to the possibility of adding, as I say, the technical advisers, when we have that sort of a meeting, to do it behind closed doors as well.

Having said that, I'd be interested in hearing whatever other MPs have to say, so if you have a speakers list I will yield the floor.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Martin.

My understanding is that you are officially proposing this amendment to your motion. Is that correct?

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** I think I will, in the interests of time. I would like to add a letter (f), if you will, although I apologize that it's not on the form that I submitted. We will simply call it technical advisers or representatives. I'm at a loss as to how to—

[Translation]

**The Chair:** You want to add point (f) for technical briefings. Is that right?

• (1545)

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Technical briefing; that would be the right terminology. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** I hope this is clear for everyone.

Mr. Trottier, did you want to say something about the amendment?

[English]

**Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC):** I wanted to intervene on the overall motion.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** It was said that this was a friendly amendment. Does the committee agree to it?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Amendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** We will now move on to the main motion.

Mr. Trottier, go ahead.

[English]

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would say to my colleague, Pat, that we have had a very collaborative and constructive committee in the first session of Parliament, in the first two years. I think we got a lot of work done. It was a very workmanlike committee. I don't know if that's considered an appropriate non-sexist term, workmanlike. We got a lot of work done and it was very effective.

I don't sense that this motion is in reaction to anything that we might have done on this committee. We went in camera for doing things like working on reports, for some technical briefings and so on, so I think we were wise in our use of in camera motions where it was appropriate.

I've met a lot of parliamentarians from different parliaments around the world. They've often asked about committees and how they function in our Parliament compared to theirs. I met somebody from Estonia recently. That country has a fairly new democracy, having... It's an old democracy that disappeared for a while and then was renewed when it escaped or broke free from the Soviet Union. None of their committees are televised and they said there's a different comportment. It's not about secrecy, it's just the way people behave and act when the cameras are on compared to when they're not on. So there are some advantages to not having the cameras on at times. I think that's why we use in camera, for example, when we're just working on the wording of a report. There's no real benefit to

having the cameras on where people are posturing and perhaps not just trying to work constructively. Other parliaments in the world do not have televised sessions.

The one challenge, and I think Pat raised it already, is that there are scenarios that you sometimes cannot predict. Even today there was a motion that was presumably well thought through. It identified another exception of another instance where we might need to go in camera. So it's a question of when you can exhaustively identify every scenario where you might need to go in camera.

For example, someone could be having a heart attack and it would be against the rules to go in camera while that person is having a heart attack. That's just one example. There could be others. For a variety of reasons there might be a reason to go in camera. It's hard to predict each and every scenario under which you might need to go in camera. That's the main challenge.

I think there's a certain responsibility to use that kind of motion wisely, which is in the rules. There's been no abuse of that rule within this committee, at least that I've observed in the last two-plus years. In a sense, nothing particular is broken on this committee, so no fix is required.

I hope that we'll continue to have a good collaborative relationship across all parties and work to do things that we're responsible for in a manner that bears in mind our responsibilities not just to Parliament but to all Canadians. That's why I won't be supporting the motion, because I think that we just need to have that flexibility, bearing in mind what our responsibilities are as parliamentarians.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Day, go ahead.

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will support this motion, based on my short experience as a member. I was elected in 2011, and this is the third committee I am sitting on. I can tell you that in camera proceedings were used excessively, as meetings were closed for just about anything in some of the committees I sat on—which I will not name. People were constantly asking to go in camera, so that meetings would be closed. I saw some people, including aboriginals, come to testify and be given barely 20 minutes because the meeting would go in camera, so that their testimony would not be heard. In certain cases, witnesses were not given their due respect. Some of them had to travel for four or five hours to appear before us. Yet, as soon as they would start talking about a topic that the government did not like, someone would ask to move the meeting in camera. I am not talking about in camera meetings for voting results, but about cases where what was being said in camera was different from what was being said publicly.

It would be important for Canadians to know about the actual content of the comments and arguments underlying our decisions. We are asking that this motion be adopted because in camera meetings are being used excessively in a number of committees.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Day.

Mr. Byrne, you may speak to the motion.

[English]

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think it might be useful for all members of the committee to reflect on the evolving circumstances that each and every one of us, as members of the House and as a collective, face in terms of scrutiny. This is a government oversight committee. It's a standing committee established by order of the House of Commons and established in the Standing Orders as, by necessity, being chaired by a member of the opposition. That is based on both substance and perception in that it's very important that the public—the Canadian taxpayer—understands that this oversight committee is free and open to investigate whatever is deemed important to investigate in terms of the overall operations of the Government of Canada and its decision making.

We are living in a changing environment where even the House has decided and the House leadership has decided that the meetings of the Board of Internal Economy should be made public. Every time that we go in camera, every time a government oversight committee—which is by necessity, by choice of the House, chaired by a member of the opposition to ensure its integrity and the perception of its integrity.... Every time we move in camera, we diminish that overall perception of what it is that we are to accomplish or attempting to accomplish and whether or not we'll be effective at it.

Quite frankly, I think that if there is an extension or overuse of the in camera practice, at some point in time it will draw the attention of media and the Canadian public. I say this not as a threat or as some sort of hokey-pokey sort of caution. But the reality is, for this committee to function well, for all us to be seen as functioning well within the committee, we not only have to function well, but we have to be perceived as functioning well.

That's why I think this motion is eminently responsible. It should be supported. It's left enough room that reasonable and responsible business of the committee can still be done in a more productive way, which is at times during the in camera session. But that should be the exception rather than the norm. Whenever we're discussing specifics of a government decision or government operation, that should never be in camera. What's the function of having an oversight committee if we're to do so in secret?

So I'll be voting in favour of this. Mr. Chair, I'll be asking for a recorded motion on it. I don't think the government should feel threatened by this whatsoever. In fact, I think the government should put out a press release saying that the majority of members on the government side actually brought this into effect. I think that's the better headline than official opposition proposed the motion.

With that said, thank you. If it doesn't pass, it doesn't pass, but at the very least I hope we live by its spirit regardless.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Byrne.

It is now Mr. Blanchette's turn to speak to the motion.

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Of course, I will vote in favour of the motion. That's not necessarily related to this committee's past, as Bernard said so well. I agree with him. The fact that members are putting forward such motions is necessarily due to the abuse that has taken place in the past.

This is a Westminster-style Parliament. Members have spaces where they can express themselves and do their work as MPs. They can do their best to improve bills and to study issues that are important to Canadians. Those spaces have to be preserved.

This motion aims to preserve those spaces of freedom where members can work transparently, and where integrity can be promoted in this Parliament. We cannot do our work without that guarantee and with a knife to our throats all the time. That's why I think that fairness and ability to be transparent must be guaranteed. That is what Canadians expect from us. They want us to be able to publicly debate issues that are important to them.

Earlier, Bernard was saying that the motion lacked flexibility. I would have preferred to hear how he would improve the motion, instead of simply rejecting it. That would have been a useful discussion.

I will end my remarks by suggesting that Bernard propose changes that could perhaps satisfy us by guaranteeing that space of freedom and, at the same time, helping achieve a flexibility that has nothing to do with the committee's actual operations. We do understand that in camera meetings are necessary from time to time for certain matters. That's understandable. However, all other kinds of debates must always remain public.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1555)

**The Chair:** The debate continues. I yield the floor to Mr. Martin.

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Thank you.

Very briefly, Mr. Chair, I want to rebut two points that Bernard made.

The first involves his concern that it would be impossible to codify or list every eventuality whereby we might want to go in camera. There's nothing stopping the committee, by unanimous consent—or even a majority vote, I suppose... no, it would have to be by unanimous consent—to bypass the rules as they are, in an emergency exigency such as the example he used.

Second, the issue is not whether we're televised or not televised and about how the actors might behave differently if the TV were turned on. Most of our committee meetings are not televised, even when they're public. The issue is the secrecy associated with an in camera meeting: that no one is allowed to ever find out who said what or how people voted; they only learn the outcome of the meeting, but with none of the detail and none of the content associated with the meeting. That's the secrecy that I think should offend people's sensibilities. The people I represent have the right to know how I conducted myself at a committee meeting and how I voted on certain issues. Now all they know is the end result.

Those are two of the points that were made that I disagree with. I don't think there's any justification, for instance, to go in camera on the clause-by-clause analysis of a bill. We see that happen all the time. The public is probably interested, as we deal with clause-by-clause study and amendments that may be put forward. That door has been closed habitually at most committees that deal with legislation.

Our government operations committee rarely deals with legislation as such. We're dealing mostly with government operations or Treasury Board issues; we don't go clause by clause on bills quite as often. But the same reasoning and the same logic applies: the public has a right to know what their elected officials are doing, what they're saying, and how they're voting, except in what we believe are very limited circumstances.

• (1600)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Martin.

I now yield the floor to Ms. Ablonczy.

[English]

**Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As you know I'm a new member of this committee, but I'm not new to the House. I've been here 20 years as of last week.

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

**Hon. Diane Ablonczy:**It's interesting to hear my colleague Mr. Martin's nostalgia for the good old Liberal-majority days. I remember them quite differently. The high-handedness on committees was so egregious that on a couple of occasions I actually got up and walked out because things were completely unacceptable to me as a person who believes in democracy.

But to suggest there's only democracy if it's in the full glare of every word being published I think misses an important point. The important point of democracy is that elected representatives do the business of the people and look after their interests in a way that is, as my colleague rightly said, as non-partisan as possible.

Experience has shown—at least my experience—that when the cameras are on—and I have to say I have been guilty of this myself, and some of you might know that—there is sometimes a definite shift in the way issues are dealt with or even the way witnesses are dealt with. I think that at this committee, out of all committees, it's important that from time to time we deal with these things among ourselves without any temptation to take highly partisan approaches to these issues. This is important. Sometimes we know that when we say something, we have to influence just each other. We're not trying to turn the tide of public opinion against the government or against any of the other parties for that matter, but we are dealing strictly and solely with issues. Sometimes that means we need to, let's say, be free from external distractions or from the opportunity to make distractions.

I understand my colleague's good intentions behind this, but I would say that as a committee—which is an important committee—

we need to have the flexibility to continue to go in camera from time to time.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** That concludes the debate. Thank you all for your comments.

As no one is left on the list, we can go ahead with the vote.

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Could we have a recorded vote?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** We will have a recorded division. I will now let the clerk proceed with the vote.

(Motion negated: nays 7; yeas 4 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** We are continuing the consideration of routine motions.

Mr. Trottier, did you want to add something?

[English]

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There was another motion, which I believe is in order, a motion that was proposed by the government side in relation to the orders of reference from the House respecting bills and the manner in which independents can intervene and propose amendments.

I could read it out, but the gist of the motion is that independents—and there are several in the House—can intervene with amendments on bills at committee.

We believe this is a fair motion in the sense that the committee stage is the appropriate place to have that deeper debate on amendments to bills and specific clauses, a place to have that meaningful discussion. There can be some questioning of the independent member who might have submitted that amendment.

The committee is actually a better forum than the House of Commons is for doing that, and that's why we are proposing this amendment.

• (1605)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Could you please read it?

[English]

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** It says the proposed amendment to the routine motions are these:

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, in a letter to the Chair of the Committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the Bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the Committee consider;

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

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

[Translation]

**The Chair:** We will now move on to the debate.

Do you want to justify your proposal right away?

[English]

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** I have nothing further to add. Our Parliament independents need to have an appropriate forum for submitting amendments. On this side, we believe, and I think most members will agree, that it's important for members to have that opportunity. The committee is a very good forum for them to submit amendments to bills.

[Translation]

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

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Chair, I see that I'm on the list to speak to this motion. Would you allow me to make a point of order first?

I'm interested in debating this motion, but perhaps we could back up and just pass routine motion number one, so that the analysts can join us at the table. Then I could ask questions of those analysts in relation to the motion that Mr. Trottier has put forward.

Would that be allowed?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Yes. Provided that we have unanimous consent, we can move on to motion no. 1, which reads as follows:

That the Committee retain the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist it in its work.

Do we have unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** It has been moved by Mr. Blanchette that motion no. 1 be adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** I invite the analysts to come to the table.

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

**The Chair:** Let's now come back to the motion.

Mr. Martin, go ahead.

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Thank you very much, and thank you for the cooperation on that diversion.

We have some real concerns and some real reservations about the motion being put forward by Mr. Trottier on behalf of the government. I understand his point of view. I take him at his word that his intentions are honourable and that he's trying to represent the best interests of the independent MPs who are not given status at parliamentary committees.

I'm just concerned, and I think I have evidence to indicate—perhaps I'll be asking the analysts to help with some of this as well—that there may be perverse consequences to this. However well-intentioned the idea is, to pass this motion as it stands might actually

have the effect of diminishing the opportunities that independent MPs currently have.

The way I will explain that is, yes, it would give the opportunity for independent MPs to come before a parliamentary committee at committee stage and introduce amendments, but it doesn't give them the right to vote unless one of the opposition MPs voluntarily steps aside, I understand; there's a way you could appoint that independent person to occupy your voting space. That provides no real satisfaction, I think, to the independent MP.

But having given them, as I heard the term used, a poisoned chalice, if you will, giving them that opportunity to make representations at the committee precludes the opportunity to move amendments at the report stage. I could be corrected if I'm wrong. That's why I wanted the analysts to be present here, and the clerk as well. We could use the advice from Marc-Olivier.

As I understand it, it's up to the Speaker, always, whether they'll entertain amendments at report stage. But the past practice has been, and recent rulings have been, that if you had the opportunity to introduce amendments at the committee stage—even if you didn't, but you had the opportunity, by virtue of this motion, to introduce your amendments here—you would not be allowed to introduce that motion at report stage.

Now, at least at the report stage, for an amendment moved by an independent member at report stage, they get to vote on their own amendment. Surely that's one of the most fundamental rights that a member of Parliament has—to be able to put forward, defend, and then vote on the position they're bringing to the table.

In this case, I can't see that. I'm very afraid that the consequence of passing this motion would be to deny a fundamental right and deny the privilege, if you will, of an independent MP.

There's a section that I would cite from O'Brien and Bosc. Again, I would invite input or participation from either our clerk or our analysts, who may be able to point out sections that I might have missed here. On page 783 it says this:

Normally, the Speaker will not select a motion in amendment previously ruled out of order in committee, unless the reason for that ruling was the requirement for a royal recommendation or that the amendment moved in committee had proposed the deletion of an entire clause of a bill.

So the Speaker won't allow an amendment at report stage that simply says “delete section 2”.

The section continues:

Furthermore, the Speaker will normally only select motions in amendment that could not have been presented in committee.

In other words, whether you introduced it at committee or you didn't introduce it at committee, if you had the opportunity and chose not to, you still couldn't introduce it later on in the House.

To me that makes the case that this is a dangerous move. I think what we're lacking around this table is the point of view of the independents, to see how they feel about it. We're acting on their behalf, or we're acting in such a way that it would have a material effect on the way they're allowed to conduct their business, depending on the outcome of this vote.



●(1610)

I have a letter that was circulated, dated October 29, that's today, signed by Brent Rathgeber, Bruce Hyer, and Elizabeth May.

Do all committee members have this letter? I think it might be worth reading this fairly short letter into the record, or I could summarize at least some of the objections they raise. They seem to have been alerted to the fact that this was going on at these committees, because they went to the trouble of printing this letter up with some of their concerns. We have the background of the current motion, and maybe I'll start in the middle of the letter. They point out that in the fall of 2012, the House leader for the government, Peter Van Loan, asked the Speaker to circumvent the rights of members in Parliament who were not members of larger parties by suggesting a novel process for amendments from independents. He proposed to the Speaker that amendments from such MPs be subjected to a trial vote on one sample amendment. If that amendment were defeated, the suggestion was that none from the smaller, independent MPs should be entertained. That didn't make a lot of sense.

The Speaker's ruling was clear, saying that it "remains true that parliamentary procedure is intended to ensure a balance between the government's need to get its business through the House, and the opposition's responsibility to debate that business without completely immobilizing the proceedings of the House".

He added that "the underlying principles these citations express are the cornerstones of our parliamentary system. They enshrine the ancient democratic tradition of allowing the minority to voice its views and opinions in the public square and, in counterpoint, of allowing the majority to put its legislative program before Parliament and have it voted upon".

I understand what the government House leader was trying to achieve then, and I think this is probably the origin of the motion that we have before us today. They didn't want a bunch of nuisance amendments, dilatory amendments, just to simply bog down the proceedings of the House of Commons. We've all lived through some of those. There was a bill that Diane will probably remember, where there were, I think, 3,000 amendments. In the Nisga'a bill, they forced a vote on 472 amendments, and having to stand up and vote on every one was ridiculous. That was simply mischief to try to stop a bill, really. It was a last-ditch effort. So all parties agreed, I think, at procedure and house affairs, that steps would be taken where the Speaker would be able to weed out the nuisance motions, or to bundle and cluster them, so you'd have 50 amendments on one vote. Those kinds of steps have been taken.

In the most recent example, we saw the leader of the Green Party, who is actually an independent MP, submit an awful lot of amendments at report stage, which bogged things down somewhat. I'm not here to defend the Green Party, but it is her right to do that, and it's the right of any member of Parliament to advance the issues they feel their constituents sent them here to do.

If we support this motion, I think we would be undermining the rights of at least these three independent members of Parliament. I notice there's at least one other independent MP who has not signed this letter, and that would be Dean Del Mastro. I don't know what his views are on it, but it may well be something to do with this budget

bill or omnibus bill. He may have an amendment that he would seek to put forward.

The Speaker ruled quite recently on this matter, and I think upheld the concern that I am expressing, on Thursday, June 6, 2013.

●(1615)

The Speaker was ruling on a question of privilege, I think it was, raised by the House leader for the NDP. Just at the very end of his ruling he said, "In summary, then...I am entirely sympathetic to the procedural consequence of this development".

Let me just back up a little bit.

During Bill C-60, which was a finance bill, an independent MP did come before the committee and introduced a number of amendments, I believe.

Is that correct?

The member was invited to do so in a special, exceptional "one off". The House leader for the NDP then made a point of order that the order adopted by the Standing Committee on Finance respecting the consideration of Bill C-60 went beyond the committee's authority as conferred by the House. Specifically, he explained that the committee order invited certain other standing committees to study different parts of the bill and, along with independent members, to submit amendments to the Standing Committee on Finance.

His point was that the Standing Committee on Finance didn't have the right to confer the opportunity for independent MPs to submit their amendments at the committee stage, knowing that their avenue of recourse is during report stage. The Speaker upheld the right of the committee to do that, but also confirmed our concerns that it's a "one or the other" situation.

There is no precedent at all for this. All we can go by is the past practice of numerous Speakers, who state quite clearly that the Speaker will only select motions of amendment that could not have been presented at the committee.

That is the point of my poisoned chalice—I think that's a good analogy. It may seem like a nice idea, and it may seem in the best interests, and it may welcome an independent MP to sit at our committee and move these amendments. It even contemplates offering them an opportunity to make a brief representation in support of their amendments. The question remains how brief and whether it is a dead end once the committee rejects that amendment.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I can't support this, in the interest of fairness—and in the interests of parliamentary privilege, I believe—because I don't think this committee should be able to strip the democratic rights of independent members to vote on the very amendments they are putting forward.

Thank you.

●(1620)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Martin.

We will now continue to debate the motion.

Mr. O'Connor, over to you.

[English]

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC):** I take a different tack here. What we're saying is that independent members are members who can be by themselves or with another group that does not exceed 12 members. When they are 12, they are a party and they have chairs in the committees and do all their work at the committees.

In the setup we have right now, there may be eight or nine independent members. There are not enough of them to come together, and I don't think they have any coherent policy to come together. What we are offering them is a fair chance to make inputs into committee work, to make amendments on bills or finances, whatever we're dealing with.

This hasn't happened in past years. It has happened recently. It is a good idea. If you are a member of a party, you get a chance to be on a committee, you get a chance to make your motions, and they are voted on one way or another. Allowing independent members to do this means they can get their amendments in, and these can pass or not pass. It's no different from being part of a party. Later on, at the report stage, amendments can be put that are not basically identical to the ones presented in committee.

If parties can come up with amendments at the report stage, independent members can come up with amendments at the report stage. I don't see any difference. I think it's an advantage for independent members to be part of a committee and submit their amendments. Therefore, I support this concept.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Van Kesteren, go ahead.

[English]

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've been listening to this debate and I see both sides. I respect and I agree with my colleague that opportunity is afforded to independents. At the same time, I listened to Mr. Martin, and his biggest concern is that as members of Parliament they don't have a chance to vote on this issue.

In the spirit of cooperation, could we make an addition to this motion? It should say that when a member is presenting a change or an amendment it is allowed for him to have a vote.

Obviously, somebody would have to take the place of that vote. For example, if Ms. May were here and she wanted to vote, there's the normal coalition that we have between the numbers of those. Possibly Mr. Martin could step aside and let Ms. May take that vote. That would be a possible solution and they'd still have the opportunity to vote.

I'd like to make that proposal for an amendment to the motion.

•(1625)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Are you moving an amendment to the motion?

[English]

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren:** The amendment would be that since a private or an independent doesn't have the ability to vote, because of the numbers on the committee, then someone from one of the other parties could offer to step aside and let that person have a vote. Analysts, maybe you can help me with this.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** I will ask the clerk whether this amendment is in order.

After some thought, I think that this amendment is not in order, since a member of the committee cannot at any time be asked to step aside. However, you could always try to pass that as a friendly amendment. Once an opportunity presents itself, it may be possible to do so. It will depend on what the committee members want to do. However, the amendment cannot be directly included in the motion, unfortunately, since it is not in order.

We will now come back to the main motion.

Mr. Trottier, go ahead.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** I would like to ask our clerk a question.

According to the current rules, can a member yield their seat and their right to a vote to an independent member?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Marc-Olivier Girard):** A standing order of the House of Commons—and for the true rule buffs among you, I want to specify that I am talking about Standing Order 119—says exactly the following:

119. Any Member of the House who is not a member of a standing, special or legislative committee, may, unless the House or the committee concerned otherwise orders, take part in the public proceedings of the committee, but may not vote or move any motion, nor be part of any quorum.

Unfortunately, this means that the committee could not adopt a motion that would go against the Standing Orders, as those are higher-level rules that govern your work.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I hope that answers your question, Mr. Trottier.

We will now come back to the main motion.

Mr. Blanchette, you have the floor.

**Mr. Denis Blanchette:** My question has to do with what the clerk just said.

Does that mean that the motion is not in order?

I think he said that the committee could not receive amendments from someone who is not a member of the committee. If we are talking about an independent member, who is not a member of the committee, is the government motion still in order?

**The Chair:** Let me just have a look at the Standing Order that was quoted.

Mr. Blanchette, the motion was drafted specifically to avoid any contradiction with Standing Order 119. In point (b), the following is clearly stated:

(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

I have no one left on my list.

Mr. Martin, did you want to continue the debate?

• (1630)

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Yes, I do, and I won't take too much more time.

I think it's important that we represent the concerns and the views as expressed by the actual independent MPs, as set out in this letter. I only scanned through it and quoted a little from the middle. But some of the introductory paragraphs are worth noting, I think, and the committee members should be aware of them.

It is signed by these three independent members and they are saying:

We are writing to respectfully request that members of your committee reject the motion put forth to significantly reduce the rights of individual Members of Parliament.

They're referring specifically to this motion that we are dealing with.

The motion to require that members, who are either independent or are members of recognized parties with fewer than 12 MPs, submit amendments to your committee 48 hours prior to the start of the clause by clause consideration of any bill is deeply problematic. The clear purpose of this motion is to reduce the rights of Members of Parliament.

That should concern us and give us pause; at least we should take time to seriously consider this. The letter goes on:

The context surrounding this motion should give committee members pause. The identical motion has already been tabled in both the Procedure and House Affairs and Finance Committees, and the same motion will soon be tabled in each of the other Standing Committees.

It is not plausible that it was actually drafted by the member who has submitted it for your consideration. The only explanation for identical motions in multiple committees submitted by Conservative MPs is that the Prime Minister's Office is coordinating and mandating these actions.

The context is this: A party with the majority in the House is seeking to foreclose the one opportunity that MPs who are either Independents or in smaller recognized political parties have to present, speak to, and vote on amendments. By the backdoor, the PMO is attempting to change the legislative process. As this letter will detail, in all previous changes to legislative process, there has been substantive review and study.

Members of all parties should give such a move serious consideration. *The change that reduces our rights today could reduce yours tomorrow.* Meanwhile, it represents a violation of fundamental principles of Westminster parliamentary democracy.

I'm going to go on a little bit, with your indulgence, Mr. Chair, and I'll only take two or three minutes. But this is worth putting on the record, I think, before we cast a ballot that might have such serious consequences. We owe it to ourselves and to these MPs to consider it.

They go on to say, "Those principles"—speaking of the Westminster parliamentary democracy—"are based on the notion that all Members of Parliament are equal".

I remember many Speakers reminding us of this on a regular basis.

Each MP must have an equal opportunity to fully represent the concerns of our constituents. This motion circumscribes those rights for the convenience of a majority. It is parliamentary vandalism.

The letter provides the background on the treatment of parties with fewer than 12 members. This is interesting, too.

For nearly all of Canada's first century, from 1867 to 1963, all Members of Parliament were not only equal in theory, we were equal in reality. The treatment of Members of Parliament who were not members of parties with a dozen members as distinct and different from those with membership in larger parties stems from a decision in 1963 that related exclusively to financial resources to larger parties.

Over time, the "12 person rule" has concretized to deny MPs and smaller parties, as well as Independents, rights to participate on committees, even though the 1963 rule only extended to allocation of financial resources.

In 1979, Speaker Jerome dealt with the matter in relation to the status of the five members of the Social Credit Party:

Speaker Jerome is quoted as saying,

"We ought to be clear at the outset that it is not a transgression of propriety to mention the name of the political party of the members who are involved; it is the Social Credit Party of Canada. Its members are members of this House of Commons and their leader is the hon. member for Beauce. Those are the realities. The vote...under no circumstances...can be taken to pass out of existence a political party, nor can it be taken to render as independent members the group which has been recognized as a party and which has in fact been seated together as a political party. The Social Credit Party exists as a political party and the five members exist as members of that party under their leader."

• (1635)

I don't know why they reference that particular quote. I'm trying to understand the significance of that other than to defend the right of Elizabeth May to be called the Green Party of Canada, which really has nothing to do with the matter before us here today.

I'm looking for relevant information because I'm sorry that not all MPs have this letter. It does make some interesting points.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** You can have a few minutes to think while Mr. O'Connor takes the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Good idea.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** I assume you're reading the comments of the independent members about the appearance that the motion to allow independent members to participate in committees is somehow orchestrated by somebody out there. Well, the very first item we considered today was about in camera sessions in the committees. That identical motion is being passed through every committee in the House, all 26 committees. I can only imagine they're being orchestrated by the OLO. We can make all these accusations about the PMO, the OLO, and whatever the Liberals call themselves, the LO; however, we, on our side, believe that we are being fair to these members. We are offering them something they didn't get before. We are offering them a chance to be in a committee and to make their case in a committee. They don't lose anything because party members do the same thing in committees. When we get to the report stage, if those party members can come up with some amendments that weren't covered, they can make that push at the report stage. I don't see these people losing any benefit whatsoever.

**An hon. member:** Hear, hear!

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Martin, you may continue the debate.

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** If I could continue in response to a point that Mr. O'Connor made earlier and has repeated again now, he makes the argument that these independent members are really losing nothing because they can bring forward amendments at the report stage the same way as we can. It also goes on to say in O'Brien and Bosc:

A motion previously defeated in committee will only be selected if the Speaker judges it to be of such significance to Members as to warrant further consideration at report stages. For the purposes of debate the Speaker will also group motions....

He pretty much rules out the opportunity to bring up the same motion at the report stage that you tried to get through at committee. The key point here is the motions they move at committee they're not allowed to vote on. I don't think it's fair to ask one of us to step out and not cast our ballot in order to give them the opportunity to vote on their own amendment. It's not satisfactory any way you look at it. I can't help but agree with the authors of this letter that it's a very thinly veiled attempt to muzzle and silence some of the independent members who have been so vigorously exercising their rights that it's become inconvenient and a nuisance. I agree it must be off-putting for the government side to have 200 to 300 amendments at report stage. I also think that the Speaker has enough tools in his or her tool box to rule on that to make sure that it doesn't unduly interfere with the ability of the government to advance its legislative agenda. They bundle things. They rule a lot of report stage amendments out of order. If, in the worst-case scenario, once a year we do have to vote into the night to accommodate the legitimate amendments brought forward by independents, so be it. It's not the end of the world.

I wish the government would rethink this motion because I don't think its intentions are constructive. I don't even think they are honourable when you scratch the surface of them.

•(1640)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you all for your comments.

As I have no one left on the list, we can vote on the motion as read by Mr. Trottier a few minutes ago.

[English]

**An hon. member:** A recorded vote.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** A recorded division is called for. I will let the clerk proceed with the vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** We can now move on to the other routine motions, which are probably already before you.

Motion no. 1, proposed by Mr. Blanchette, has already been adopted.

We are moving on to motion no. 2, which concerns time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses. The motion the committee adopted at the first meeting is the following:

That witnesses be given five (5) to ten (10) minutes to make their opening statement; that, at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses there be allocated five (5) minutes for the questioner of each party, including the responses of the witnesses, as follows: New Democratic Party, Conservative Party, New Democratic Party, Conservative Party, Liberal Party, and Conservative Party.

Mr. Trottier, are you moving motion no. 2?

[English]

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** Oui. I was wondering if you wanted me to comment on the motion, other than to say it's similar to what we had in the previous session and it seemed to work just fine.

[Translation]

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion no. 2 agreed to)

**The Chair:** We will now proceed to motion no. 3.

Before we move on, I think that Mr. Byrne has something to say.

[English]

**Hon. Gerry Byrne:** Could you confirm that this motion is consistent with the motion that was passed in the first session of the 41st Parliament?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** That is the motion that was adopted in the 1st session of the 41st Parliament. That is how the committee functioned during the previous session, when witnesses were given five to ten minutes.

So we are moving on to motion no. 3, which has to do with witnesses belonging to the same organization. I will read the motion as it was carried in the previous session:

That the Chair shall, at the start of a meeting where a number of witnesses belonging to the same organization will be appearing separately on the same study, canvass the Committee on the application of the Committee rule regarding time allocation for questioning of witnesses, in other words to determine whether the rounds of questioning by party should begin over again at the beginning when new witnesses arrive, or resume at the point they left off when the previous witness's appearance concluded.

It has been moved by Mr. Cannan that motion no. 3 be adopted.

(Motion no. 3 agreed to)

**The Chair:** We will now deal with motion no. 4.

[English]

It's on the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure and states:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of the Chair, the two Vice-Chairs, and one additional member, to be designated by the whip, from the Conservative Party.

[Translation]

It has been moved by Mr. Trottier that motion no. 4 be adopted.

(Motion no. 4 agreed to)

**The Chair:** So we will have a subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

Let's now proceed to motion no. 5, which deals with meetings without a quorum. The motion reads as follows:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least three (3) members are present, including one member from the government.

It has been moved by Mr. Martin that motion no. 5 be adopted.

(Motion no. 5 agreed to)

**The Chair:** Let's now move on to motion no. 6.

• (1645)

[English]

This is in regards to documents distribution:

That only the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to distribute documents to the members of the Committee and only when the documents are in both official languages, and that witnesses be advised accordingly.

[Translation]

It has been moved by Mrs. Day that motion no. 6 be adopted.

(Motion no. 6 agreed to)

**The Chair:** We will now proceed to motion no. 7, which concerns working meals. The motion reads as follows:

That the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the Committee and its subcommittees.

It has been moved by Mr. Martin that motion no. 7 be adopted.

(Motion no. 7 agreed to)

**The Chair:** Let's now move on to motion no. 8, which deals with travel accommodation and living expenses of witnesses. The motion is the following:

That, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses not exceeding two (2) representatives per organization; and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

It has been moved by Mr. Blanchette that motion no. 8 be adopted.

(Motion no. 8 agreed to)

**The Chair:** Mr. Cannan, you have the floor.

[English]

**Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** For witnesses, I would like to remind the clerk, as much as possible, that we've invested millions of dollars in the new teleconference systems throughout the parliamentary precinct so I'd like to see that we utilize those services and not have to fly in witnesses from Toronto, for example, or right across the country. If it is somebody local they could come here, but I don't see any reason why we can't use our video networking system that we have in place. We spent millions and millions of dollars on it.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Did you hear this request, Mr. Clerk? It was asked that teleconferences be used when possible.

Mr. Martin, go ahead.

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** On the same point, Mr. Chair, if I might, it's generally accepted that it is more advantageous for a witness to appear in person. I've even heard witnesses complain that they face a geographic bias and if you're from Toronto, Montreal, or Ottawa you can probably appear in person and make your case to a parliamentary committee with all the flourish that appearing in person affords itself, but if you're from Kelowna or Winnipeg or somewhere like Whitehorse, Yukon, it's more expensive and therefore committees are more reluctant to allow those people to come in person.

I don't think we should make the cost factor the determining factor. If a person is not able to attend in person then by all means we default to the electronic communication, but there is no substitute for appearing in person and making your case face-to-face with parliamentarians, in my view.

As a western Canadian, I feel strongly that people shouldn't be precluded the opportunity to come in person just because we've spent millions of dollars on an electronic service.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Your comments have probably been duly noted by the clerk.

We are moving on to motion no. 9, which concerns access to in camera meetings. The motion reads as follows:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to have one staff member present from their office or from their party at *in camera* meetings.

It has been moved by Mr. Trottier that motion no. 9 be adopted.

(Motion no. 9 agreed to)

• (1650)

[English]

**The Chair:** We proceed to number 10, which deals with transcripts of in camera meetings: That one copy of the transcript of each *in camera* meeting be kept in the Committee Clerk's office for consultation by members of the Committee or by one of their staff members.

[Translation]

It has been moved by Ms. Day that motion no. 10 be adopted.

(Motion no. 10 agreed to)

**The Chair:** The last motion—motion no. 11—pertains to notice of motion. It reads as follows:

That a notice of 48 hours, interpreted as two nights, be required before a member may move a substantive motion, unless it deals directly with the matter before the Committee at this time, provided that (a) this notice be emailed to the Committee Clerk no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; that (b) the notice be distributed by e-mail to members 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; that (c) notices received after the deadline hour be deemed to have been received during the next business day; and that (d) this rule does not prevent a member to give notice of a motion orally during a meeting of the Committee, in which case notice shall be deemed to have been given before the deadline that day.

It has been moved by Mr. Van Kesteren that motion no. 11 be adopted.

(Motion no. 11 agreed to)

**The Chair:** That's all for routine motions, unless other members would like to add something.

Mr. Trottier, go ahead.

[English]

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** In light of our adoption of the routine motion for a planning subcommittee, I propose that the planning subcommittee meet at the next available OGGO meeting, on November 5. We will not be having a meeting on October 31. If the planning committee could meet on November 5, then we could lay out a calendar for the months of November and December.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** It has been proposed that the subcommittee meet on November 5. That is not a problem. I should point out that Thursday, October 31, is considered a Friday. Normally, the committee does not meet on days treated as Friday, unless committee members agree to it.

Mr. Martin, the floor is yours.

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Trottier, is it your idea to use the 3:30 to 5:30 time slot on Tuesday for this planning meeting or did you want to sneak in a planning meeting ahead of time and then have the results from that meeting dealt with at our regularly scheduled full meeting of the committee?

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** I think it would depend on how efficiently we could do the planning committee work. If the subcommittee can get things done in, say, an hour, then we could, but it might be difficult to predict at this time.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Regarding the subcommittee's meeting, it is more a matter of figuring out whether we would take the main committee's time slot, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on November 5. We wouldn't have to use the whole two-hour period.

Do you want us to schedule the meeting at a different time—perhaps in the morning before the committee's meeting?

[English]

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** Mr. Chair, if the subcommittee is able to lay out a calendar on November 5, then in a few minutes at the beginning of the meeting on November 7, we could just say, "Here's what the subcommittee decided on" and we can vote as a committee to approve that calendar. I think that might be more efficient. If it takes more time for the subcommittee to do its work on November 5, then we won't have to keep other people waiting for that meeting to end.

So maybe we could just add "approval of the committee agenda" to the agenda of November 7. Presumably we'll have some other business on November 7 that we could fit in there.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Okay. The subcommittee will meet on November 5.

[English]

and then report to the committee on November 7.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** I think that would be appropriate.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Excellent. Consequently, the main committee will not have to consider the second item on the agenda—the planning of future business—since that will be discussed by the subcommittee.

With that resolved, we have nothing left on the agenda. Does anyone have anything to add?

Mr. Martin, go ahead.

• (1655)

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** I must have nodded off for a minute when we were approving the structure of the planning committee meeting. I've just voted in favour of leaving me off the committee.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** That's why I was looking at you.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** I know. Okay, I'm a little stunned today. I didn't get the signal there.

The way we dealt with this in the past was that in order for the chair and the two vice-chairs as well as the lead critic for the NDP to be on the committee, we expanded the planning committee to include one more Conservative and one more New Democrat so you would still have the requisite ratio that you're seeking, and I would be a part of the planning committee.

Is that agreeable as an amendment to the orders?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** We would need the committee's unanimous consent to amend the motion that was adopted earlier today.

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** I would ask for unanimous consent, then, to expand the planning committee in our routine motions to include one extra member from the Conservatives and one extra from the NDP.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Do we have unanimous consent?

Mr. Trottier, go ahead.

[English]

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** I think we could agree to that. Also, we could use Mr. Martin's experience and wisdom on this committee and I think it would be useful to give us some insight into the planning of the calendar.

Maybe the one condition would be that it would be a six-member committee so I think it needs to be understood that the chair would not be a voting member of that subcommittee.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Would anyone else like to participate in the debate? It appears that no one would.

In that case, do we have unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we don't have consent.

That concludes today's meeting. I have nothing left on the agenda.

The meeting is adjourned.

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