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Chair

The Honourable Wayne Easter

Standing Committee on Finance

Friday, September 9, 2016

•(1105)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

We're here, pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), for a meeting requested by four members of the committee to discuss a request to undertake a study on the Canada pension plan agreement—at least, that's how I read it.

On September 4 there was a letter directed to the clerk of the committee by Ms. Raitt, Mr. McColeman, Mr. Liepert, and Mr. Caron, so we will turn to one of those four.

Go ahead, Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

First of all, it's good to see that everybody is in good health coming back to the committee on this wonderful summer day.

As Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, we're extremely concerned about the lack of information, the lack of analysis, and the lack of consultation—it has not happened, as far as we know, or we haven't been told of it if it has happened—regarding the changes to the CPP.

It was announced that an agreement in principle came into existence between the finance minister and his provincial colleagues. That's about all we've heard. We've heard that there was an urgency to get something done. We don't know if we're going to see legislation in the fall or if it will be a Governor in Council order outside of Parliament that will do this. There's just a lack of knowledge around this issue, and it's a huge concern.

We've had economic round tables through the summer, in particular with businesses, which are extremely tentative and extremely nervous about the effects these increases could have on them, particularly in the case of small businesses.

From our reading of the situation, there's been no meaningful consultation that we're aware of with organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which represents tens of thousands of businesses in this country, and there's been no consultation, as far as we know—at least, they tell us there hasn't been—with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, which represents all varieties of businesses in this country. As far as we know at this point, not having been party to any information, we don't know if there's been any meaningful consultation with the public generally and with workers on how their pay will be affected if these changes come into effect.

We realize that the government made this commitment during the election campaign. We acknowledge that, but we think this is the public venue where we let Canadians know how this is going to affect not only them personally but the economy in general and the fiscal policy of the government, and how it intertwines in our system of economics across this country. This is what the finance critic and I heard in our round tables across the country when we were engaging with people.

I will lead off, Chair, with a motion. I'll read the motion:

That the Standing Committee on Finance invite the Honourable Bill Momeau to appear before the committee to answer questions about the Government's June 20, 2016 agreement with the provinces to expand the Canada Pension Plan.

I have copies of the motion. I can pass them out. I can give them to the clerk.

The Chair: Are you going to speak to that motion now?

Mr. Phil McColeman: I'll speak to that motion now.

I'm not sure all committee members are aware that in a lead-up to this meeting, we wrote a letter to the finance minister 15 days ago. It was a letter directed to him, specifically informing him that we were concerned about this issue and about a lack of information, and that we had the concerns I brought up previously. We asked him to consider coming to this meeting, not specifically on this date but on a date that was convenient to him. We gave him 15 days' notice that we were intending to call this meeting today, as the four members have. We asked him to indicate dates that might suit him, and we had no response.

I'll also say that having no response from the minister, we determined that this was such an important issue that we initiated the process for using Standing Order 206(4).

The Chair: It's 106(4).

Mr. Phil McColeman: That's how it came about.

We are saying in this motion that we would like the minister to be here. We think he's the appropriate person to speak to this issue, because he's the lead on it. We would like to have him here at the committee. Frankly, we would have liked to have him today or on a day that he indicated, but we didn't get that.

The Chair: Okay.

I have on my list Ms. Raitt and then Mr. Sorbara.

Go ahead, Ms. Raitt.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I echo the concern my colleague well expressed.

Mr. Chair, we rose on June 17 of this year, and on June 20 the minister made the announcement of changes to the Canada Pension Plan. I am concerned and I'd like to get some answers from the minister on some specific issues, one of them being how that process actually dovetails with the formal legal process that comes under the Canada Pension Plan legislation. Have government officials been instructed to just not abide by what the legislation says?

I prepared to ask officials questions today, and I was hoping they would be here. I don't know if the minister actually knows the answers, because they are technical questions, but I would have appreciated if the officials had shown up. They know we've had these questions for a long time.

Mr. Chair, there's supposed to be a review every three years. Indeed the annual report, which was signed by the Minister of Finance, notes that there is a triennial review, and it's on the basis of this triennial review that changes are made to the CPP. Now, this may seem to be a little bit technical and in the weeds, but I think it's really pertinent to the issue at hand: why the rush?

The only testimony we have on record so far on the CPP comes from Jack Mintz, who appeared on Thursday, June 16, before the Senate Standing Committee on National Finance. He gave evidence, and he was asked, because it was fresh, what he thought about the CPP expansion. His initial advice and evidence led with the following quote: "The question is, what's the problem?"

Mr. Mintz went on to talk about the fact that he has studied this issue in the past. McKinsey has studied it. The truth is that 83% of Canadians are actually doing fine and are in a financially sustainable program of support for retirement.

One of the questions I'd like to ask officials, and what I'd like to ask of the minister when he appears, is that while there may be gaps in CPP—and I recognize that there are gaps that need to be addressed—why did they not go down the road of figuring out how to help those in pain, such as single senior women who end up losing a significant amount of money—\$10,000—when their partner passes away? To me, that seems to be something we should fix and we could fix, but it is not fixed by what the minister is proposing to do.

Another aspect I would like to understand, Mr. Chair, as my colleague mentioned, is exactly what process we will be going into. Will we have until October 1, as noted in the legislation? Will a Governor in Council regulation be passed before October 1 so that this measure can be implemented? I'd like to know the answer to that as well, and we're running out of time. That's why we gave two weeks' notice for the minister.

Mr. Chair, I was asked a question by a reporter outside, who said that the minister indicated that he didn't know about the meeting today. I would suspect that you informed the office of the Minister of Finance regarding the request that he appear today. His office is saying that when they get the official paper, they will make sure to make him available. We could have missed that step in the middle. We could have had him here today, and that's why we're moving the motion to bring him in as soon as possible.

I will close, Mr. Chair, with this. The other aspect of the testimony Jack Mintz gave on that day in June was around the question "Why now, and why the rush?" I think that's an important question for Canadians: What is the motivation? He believes that right now there is a movement afoot to try to kill off the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, otherwise known in Ontario as the ORPP, for a lot of reasons. He says that "It is a terrible idea, the ORPP, one of the biggest mistakes I've seen in public policy in years. There's now an attempt to try to get a CPP expansion to try to kill off the ORPP."

Well, Mr. Chair, Ontario, although my home province, is only 38% of the country. There's another 62% that should not have a CPP change that has not been described to the public. The cost-benefit analysis has not been given to parliamentarians. The time frames and the understanding of who benefits are cloudy at best. Two polling institutions have indicated that there's a lack of understanding and much confusion about what the benefits are and what the costs are. Indeed, one of the most telling polls recently indicated that a full 25% of Canadians think it's the government that's putting more money into the pension, which we all know is not the case.

● (1110)

For clarity, for having different stakeholders come in to talk about the effect this change would have on the economy today, for understanding from the actuary what the plan is to shoehorn this separate, ad hoc process into legislation that must be abided by, and finally, for the minister to tell us what his true motivation is for these changes are the reasons I support the motion put forth by my colleague.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Raitt.

Mr. Sorbara is next.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Good afternoon, everyone. Echoing Phil's comments, it's great to see everybody here again.

I'd like to offer what I would call a friendly amendment to the motion Mr. McColeman brought forward. It would be that the Minister of Finance and officials from the Department of Finance be invited to testify before the finance committee on September 19, 2016, from 12:00 to 1:00, and that the subcommittee schedule a further meeting to hear from stakeholders."

● (1115)

The Chair: Okay, do you want to read that again so that everybody is clear about what it says? I know that it's an amendment, so it probably isn't typed out.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: It reads, "That the Minister of Finance and officials from the Department of Finance be invited to testify before the finance committee on September 19, 2016, from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m., and that the subcommittee schedule a further meeting to hear from stakeholders."

The Chair: The amendment has been moved. It's in order, as I see it.

Is there debate on the amendment—sorry, Mr. Duvall; I had you on my list.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Thank you.

I appreciate everybody being here today and giving your valuable time.

We support the main motion. I'll talk about the amendment in a minute.

On the main motion, I think it's crucial that we have up-to-date information about what was agreed to with the provinces. We certainly are very happy with this positive step forward on the CPP expansion, but there are a lot of unknowns out there, and people are very concerned. I think openness and transparency are very important.

I understand the amendment, as I was just saying, but my concern would be whether 12:00 to 1:00 is sufficient time. I think there are a lot of questions about what actually happened and I don't think one hour is going to be adequate.

I'll leave that question to you, Mr. Chair, and maybe they can answer.

The Chair: Mr. Sorbara, do you want to answer that? Then we'll turn to Mr. MacKinnon.

Do you have an answer?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: On the allocation of time, I think 12:00 to 1:00 for the Minister of Finance, with associated department officials, is plenty. I think the subcommittee can sit down to review the stakeholders and to allocate more time for stakeholders.

The Chair: Just so I'm clear, we would have the minister and officials for an hour on September 19. That will give us an outline of where the government is at. Then the subcommittee would meet to see whether other witnesses were required and when we could have them appear.

I think people have to understand as well that we are in pre-budget consultations and that we will be pretty busy from September 20 to October 31. The suggestion in the amendment is that the subcommittee would meet and determine what other witnesses we would invite as well.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: We could, for the second hour, have the department officials remain to answer further questions.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. MacKinnon, then to Mr. McColeman, and then to Mr. Duvall.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Like my colleagues, I am very happy to see you.

Mr. Duvall, welcome to the Standing Committee on Finance.

I think we have to put things in context before we vote. I sense a consensus around the table.

[*English*]

I know that our government is very proud of what has been accomplished in seemingly record time by our Minister of Finance and his provincial counterparts. Nine provinces out of ten signing on to a major expansion in retirement benefits is an important and meaningful step for Canadians, and one that I think has been done prudently. As all of you know, despite claims of lack of information,

it will be phased in over a seven-year period beginning in approximately three years and it will represent a meaningful change in the quality of life of Canadian retirees for as far as the eye can see, so I know we'll be very proud to hear the details of this arrangement from the finance minister on September 19.

The other important thing, because I know all of us as parliamentarians take our responsibilities very seriously, will take place this autumn.

● (1120)

[*Translation*]

This fall, we will hear from the Minister of Finance and his officials, and probably from experts such as the Chief Actuary of Canada and the parliamentary budget officer. We will also possibly hear from other witnesses. We have already invited the representatives of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board. We will do a very comprehensive review of this arrangement.

To answer the questions asked by my colleague Ms. Raitt, I want to point out that a bill will be drafted to implement this arrangement, and our committee will study the bill. So the Parliament of Canada will have its say. A full debate will be held on the changes the Minister of Finance will propose on September 19.

We are addressing this issue with a great deal of confidence. We are very pleased with the fact that an election promise will be kept. Once again, we will be able to tell Canadians that we are delivering on our commitments and that we will make a positive change to the quality of life of the middle class and of all Canadians.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKinnon.

Mr. Aboultaif is next.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Thank you very much.

Welcome back, everyone, to the game here.

The point is that one hour, as the motion proposes, is not enough time for questioning the minister and the officials together. I think that will be nothing but a complete waste of time. We definitely need more time to be able to discuss the details, since no details at all were released. There has just been big talk about how Canadians are going to feel better going forward, especially the retirees and the people who need the money most, while we know behind the scenes that this is not something that anyone is going to be benefiting from anytime soon. This is a very long-term thing, and God knows who, years down the road, will come back and say to Canadians, "We're sorry. We taxed you all the way on this, and right now we don't know how much you're going to benefit from it."

It's a very dangerous route we're going down. A lot of people see it as just another tax hike, and that's something we have to be careful about. We're all responsible here for moving forward on any policies that are going to hit Canadians in the pocketbooks, given the hardships we're going through right now with the economic downturn we have been facing.

I believe that one hour is not enough. Actually, even two hours is too short a time. I would like to see us have more time to question the Minister of Finance and his officials.

The Chair: Mr. Duvall is next, and then Ms. Raitt.

Mr. Scott Duvall: As I said before, our position is that this is a very good step, but more work needs to be done. I don't want to keep repeating myself, but maybe we could have some extra time with the officials after the minister is here, since we understand about his time.

My other question is on the definition of a stakeholder.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I share that concern about the definition of stakeholder. For this particular amendment, I'm not so sure that the whole committee shouldn't deal with who those stakeholders are and discuss them and put them on the table, instead of having a subcommittee deal with it. I have some concerns regarding having the subcommittee deal with it. Why not have the complete committee do so? I ask that question of the mover of the amendment.

Second, Chair, you bring up a really good point. The fact is that with this committee's workload on pre-budget consultations and the things we've already planned, we're here today after offering the minister time to be here two weeks ago. We asked him to work it into his schedule and tell us the date, but we got no meaningful reply from the minister, so we're here today. Frankly, in my opinion, he should be here today or on a day of his choosing. That should have happened before now.

That said, when I look at our schedule and the workload we have, I'm not sure the 19th is a great choice. Yes, we'd be fitting him in, but frankly, we'd probably be talking about this issue superficially, because if we bring in the stakeholders that those of us on this side want, we're going to have to put together a full agenda of one meeting after another to get the consultation with the stakeholders that hasn't happened to date, obviously, because we're now debating an amendment to bring in stakeholders.

Given all of those things, this committee may want discuss this issue with the minister next week. I think probably all committee members know that the chair worked on trying to get the minister here and suggested the 15th. We could perhaps look at that as a possibility. The reality is that maybe we should be fitting this in sooner rather than later.

• (1125)

The Chair: I think I had Mr. Sorbara first, and then Ms. O'Connell and then Mr. Grewal.

Go ahead.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: To address what was commented on earlier with regard to the proposed meeting, I mentioned that in the second hour on the 19th, with unanimous consent, we could have the department officials remain for further questioning, so that's on the table.

The motion is quite clear in terms of having the finance minister appear on the first day we're back for the sitting of Parliament, so we would like to stick to that time frame. That works for the minister and it works for everyone on our side.

I'd like to echo some of my colleague's comments on the CPP. Obviously, we live in a day and age in which a lot of companies aren't providing or have wound up their private pension plans, whether they were defined benefit or defined contribution, so the CPP is playing an even more important role in retirement futures for Canadians.

This is a campaign commitment of ours. This is a campaign commitment we have fulfilled, and we will fulfill it legislatively in the fall, so it's important for us to make sure all Canadians understand that. One of the important steps is having the finance minister appear here before the committee. With the motion we have proposed today, that will happen on the 19th of September.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm confused by the comments from Mr. McColeman just now. It's an urgent matter that must be dealt with, and he wants the minister here as soon as possible. We provide the first day back, and now all of a sudden the committee will be too busy with the pre-budget consultations that are coming up.

Mr. McColeman acknowledged that September 15 was an option, so which is it? Is this really important, or is this really about bringing the committee here and saying how they feel without actually hearing the details from the minister?

The minister, as per the motion we've put forward, would come here with officials, and then the subcommittee would determine the meeting availability for stakeholders, which has been the process so far for any topic, whether it's pre-budget consultations or matters such as the CRA. That has been the process for this committee as well as the subcommittee.

We're providing the date. In fact, the original motion from Mr. McColeman didn't even specify a date. It just said "as soon as possible". We're providing literally the first possible date when we're back. I would hope that this amendment would be passed unanimously.

As far as the definition of "stakeholder" goes, we've acknowledged it in the sense that stakeholders have been part of the process throughout. The subcommittee can find the appropriate date and find a process for all three parties at the table to provide witnesses, if that's the case.

This is nothing new to this committee. I hope we don't lose sight of the fact that we're providing the first possible date, a date that the original motion didn't even speak to.

We're happy to be here. We're happy to have the minister and officials appear, because I think Canadians will be happy to hear about all the work the minister and his officials have been doing. I hope this amendment is passed unanimously so that we can deal with exactly that and talk about the CPP enhancements and all the work the minister has done on this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

•(1130)

The Chair: Mr. Grewal is next.

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to echo the sentiments of my colleague. I'm not speaking here on behalf of the Minister of Finance, but as Mr. McColeman said, the fact of the matter is that there were conversations in the background, before this meeting was even scheduled, about getting the minister here. Then he presented a motion when we got here today that did not specify a date.

There were two dates proposed in conversations—September 15, and now, today, September 19—when the minister would be prepared to come to speak to CPP enhancements at the first possible opportunity. I just don't understand why we need to go through procedural wrangling and political grandstanding when the minister was already ready to appear before this committee. We came here today—all of us, from all across the country, some from vacation—only to get a motion put in front of us by the loyal opposition without a date specifying when he should come.

Now the amendment proposes that he show up on the first day at a special committee of finance, because he understands the importance of CPP. We all understand the importance of CPP here and across the country. It's important to have the Minister of Finance and officials here to give us an update before the legislation comes to the House in October.

I encourage members of this committee to support this amendment and get it passed. Let's go back to working for Canadians, because they sent us here to do a job.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Grewal.

Could I ask the clerk to read the amendment in the proper form before we go to Mr. McColeman and then to Ms. Raitt?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Suzie Cadieux): It is:

That the Standing Committee on Finance invite the Honourable Bill Morneau and department officials to appear before the committee on September 19, 2016, from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m., with officials staying for a second hour from 1:00 to 2:00 p. m., to answer questions about the Government's June 20, 2016 agreement with the provinces to expand the Canada Pension Plan, and that the subcommittee schedule a further meeting to hear from stakeholders.

The Chair: I would say that instead of the subcommittee scheduling a meeting to hear from stakeholders, it really should be for the subcommittee to schedule further meetings with stakeholders. Are we okay with that?

A voice: Yes.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I appreciate the motion, and frankly, I'll be supporting it, but let's be clear. This is an extremely important issue. That's why we're here. We're here because we were not getting, from the minister, any feedback as to whether he would appear or when he would appear. That's why we're here. We sent him a letter inviting him to choose the date, and we did not hear back. Let's be clear about why we're here.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Raitt.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Thank you very much.

I will be supporting the motion as amended. I didn't hear about the officials in the first resolution, and that's why I wasn't in favour of it.

I also want to thank Mr. MacKinnon for giving us clarity on a very important question, which has to do with the legislative path this measure will be taking. We would not have received that information, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, if we weren't here today. I think it is an important piece in order for us to understand where and when Canadians are going to have the ability to insert their comments, which they gave to us as the opposition this summer, on the topic of CPP. With that, I'm going to support the amendment as proposed.

I thank Mr. MacKinnon for being transparent on the manner in which we are going to be proceeding on these changes. We look forward to a thorough discussion.

•(1135)

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on the amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on the motion as amended?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: That is the result of this meeting.

Before I adjourn, we have a couple of issues on pre-budget consultations that I would like to raise so that the clerk and others can start inviting witnesses. There also needs to be discussion on how we will operate in pre-budget consultations.

Go ahead, Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Again, I expressed my reservations about the subcommittee—

The Chair: Before you speak, are you on pre-budget consultations or is it another issue?

Mr. Phil McColeman: We're not finished this meeting. I have more motions to present to this committee.

We on this side would like to be very clear about who we would like to have as stakeholders. I've expressed my reservations about the fact that the subcommittee will decide these things. I think we as the opposition want to button down who we invite.

The Chair: Phil, the motion already has in it that the subcommittee will meet. I think all of us on this committee understand that whatever the subcommittee decides—and I don't think the subcommittee has ever been restrictive—has to be voted on by the committee as a whole in any event. There will be an opportunity to add further names if the subcommittee, in your opinion, doesn't include enough witnesses.

Mr. Phil McColeman: With all due respect, Mr. Chair, we know that this is a majority Liberal government. They hold the balance of power on the subcommittee and they hold the balance of power around this table. In the world of trying to do our due diligence as the loyal opposition, I am going to present these motions, Mr. Chair.

This is the first one:

That the Standing Committee on Finance invite the Canadian Federation of Independent Business to provide testimony on how the Government's June 20, 2016 agreement with the Provinces to expand the Canada Pension Plan will impact jobs, economic growth and business investment.

Mr. Chair, I will distribute copies of this motion for the table now.

The Chair: We have a point of order. Go ahead, Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Chair, with all due respect, the motion that was just approved set out that the stakeholders would be determined at the subcommittee. Any of these motions would be out of order because of what was just approved and because these bounds, which Mr. McColeman voted to support, were set.

It's up to you, of course, but it's my understanding that the motion would be out of order because it's contradictory to the motion we just approved.

The Chair: Yes, we have a bit of a complication.

In the letter that was sent to the clerk, as I'm told by the clerk, section b) says to invite key stakeholders to share their views.

I don't disagree with you, Ms. O'Connell, that it's the job of the subcommittee to do that. I'd prefer to go that way, but Mr. McColeman's motion is in order due to the second section of the letter regarding Standing Order 106(4). That motion is, again—

Mr. Phil McColeman: Would you like me to read it again, Chair?

The Chair: No, we have it. Does it only deal with the one witness?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Yes, at this point. I have two further motions as well.

The Chair: Okay, the motion is on the floor. Does anybody want to speak to it? The motion has been moved.

We'll have Mr. Aboultaif and Mr. MacKinnon.

• (1140)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you.

I think that with the lack of clarity on the stakeholders in the very first motion, it's very important to agree on inviting some parties to be questioned and consulted on this issue. There won't be anything wrong with agreeing as a group right now, as a committee, on these few suggestions Mr. McColeman is making in order to have some clarity on who we're going to be seeing.

The Chair: Okay, I'll go to the list, but I think it should be understood that these motions will add to whatever happens at the steering committee. We can't take away from them if these motions carry.

Go ahead, Mr. MacKinnon.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: I think we can assure our honourable friends that the views, opinions, and recommendations they bring to the steering committee will all be taken into account and voted on, if required.

I know for our part that there will be a number of interested parties, stakeholders, and officials that we'll certainly want to consider having before the committee and that the opposition's suggestions will be taken into account at that point. I don't know that we need to spend a lot more time trying to triage individual

witnesses at this point. We can certainly have the discussion at the subcommittee.

I think you can rest assured that between this examination and the eventual examination of the bill that will enable this important change, we'll have an opportunity to exhaustively go through witnesses.

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor. Is there any further discussion? It's to invite the Canadian Federation of Independent Business as a witness on this issue.

Is there any further discussion?

(Motion negated)

The Chair: I have a question for the committee before you start, and maybe this is to the clerk. Does this motion inviting the CFIB on this issue deny the subcommittee the right to invite them?

Is the understanding that no, we still could?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: We can consider it.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I'd like to present the next motion I have.

It reads:

That the Standing Committee on Finance invite the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board to appear before the committee to provide testimony and answer questions about their investment strategy and projections for future rates of return.

I'll pass this out, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: This to invite the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board as a witness. Is there any discussion on that point?

There is no discussion. Is there anything you want to add as the mover?

I see there is not.

(Motion negated)

Mr. Phil McColeman: The third motion is:

That the Standing Committee on Finance invite the Chief Actuary of Canada to appear before the committee to provide testimony and answer questions about how the June 20, 2016 agreement with the provinces to expand the Canada Pension Plan will affect the fund's financial sustainability.

I have it in both official languages, Chair.

The Chair: Is there any explanation behind that, Mr. McColeman?

Mr. Phil McColeman: No.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion?

(Motion negated)

The Chair: Does that end your motions?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Yes, it does, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. We are of the understanding that the subcommittee can still look at those as witnesses if it so desires.

That concludes the discussion on the Canada Pension Plan.

I will just make a couple of points and see if we have agreement on the pre-budget consultations. I think we're okay in public on this matter.

We have the witness lists from all the parties, and they are in pretty good order. We're short on witnesses in some areas, in particular Newfoundland and Labrador and the Territories. We have a considerable number from the Liberals. I'm asking both the NDP and the Conservatives if they could come forward shortly if they think of anybody.

• (1145)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Yes.

The Chair: Those hearings in Newfoundland and Labrador and the Territories will be by video conference, but if you have witnesses, get them in.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Okay.

The Chair: We have two options on the panels. We could go with two one-and-a-half-hour panels of six witnesses, which gives us twelve, or we could go with three one-hour panels of four witnesses, which is also twelve per city. What we have typically done on this committee is to go with the two one-and-a-half-hour panels with a little break. Are people okay going that way? Various committees do it different ways. Are we okay on that?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Yes.

The Chair: Then we would have the same procedures we followed in the past.

Some of the committees, especially the trade committee, in an area such as Fredericton, New Brunswick, following the formal presentations with witnesses, have what they call an open mike session, which allows people who didn't get the opportunity to present a brief or who are in the audience and have something they want to say to take a minute or two, not for questions but to at least be able to put their information on the record and give committee members the opportunity to think about it. I think it gives an opportunity for the public who didn't have the opportunity to present to have their say as well.

Would people be okay with doing that at the end of the formal session, at least when we have time?

Go ahead, Mr. Duvall.

Mr. Scott Duvall: I want to just clarify that this wouldn't take away any time from the actual witnesses.

The Chair: No.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Okay. I'm fine with it.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Would we set an outer time limit, so that if 100 people showed up, we would be able to deal with that?

The Chair: Yes, we would have that. We will have to decide how much time we want to allow. Of course, it will also depend on how many witnesses we have in each area as well, because in some areas, such as Toronto for sure, we would have too many.

Does anybody have any suggestions? What have the other committees been doing? Do they set aside half an hour or an hour?

The Clerk: International trade has an hour— *[Inaudible—Editor]*.

The Chair: It varies among committees. Some have done 15 minutes, and the trade committee has done 45 minutes to an hour.

Do we want to set a 45-minute maximum?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: We are agreed.

Does anybody have anything they want to suggest or ask on the pre-budget consultations? They are starting to come together well, as people....

With regard to the open mike, we'll be putting out a news release this afternoon that will include the possibility of open mike sessions. People need to keep in mind that we're back on the 18th. On the 19th, 20th, and 21st, for four hours each day, from 3:30 to 7:30, we'll be hearing from the regional development agencies across the country, including the vice-presidents of ACOA, WD, FedNor, etc. That's the first week back. It will be four hours for three days for the regional development agencies to talk about the questions we raised about achieving growth.

We'll hear from Mr. McColeman, and then we'll adjourn.

• (1150)

Mr. Phil McColeman: As a question of process on the open mike, there's the possibility of more people wanting to speak than we can allow because of the time limits. Will you have a process in place?

You said you're going to make a public announcement about people being able to register and that it will be first-come, first-served at the mikes. It can be explained to people who may not get a chance that we did it on a fair basis and took the first ones, the first 20 people or that kind of thing, and they got two minutes each.

I'm just thinking that to avoid the conflict of someone feeling rather put out that they—

The Chair: The way it has worked is it's been first-come, first-served, and they have to register.

Our problem, and the reason we have to put a time frame on it, is that we are in a city a day and we have to move to the next city that night. We're going to be up against plane schedules. If we have the time, then we might be able to go over the hour, but we want to limit it to be able to schedule the committee's travel to the next stop. From where I sit at least, if we have the time and there are more, then I'm willing to hear from them, but we don't want to box ourselves in so that we can't catch our plane to the next stop.

With that, have a good weekend. Thank you for your cooperation.

The meeting is adjourned.

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