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Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

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EVIDENCE

Thursday, February 4, 2016

—
Chair

Mr. Andy Fillmore

Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

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• (1530)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Michelle Legault): Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum. I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, cannot entertain points of order, nor participate in debate. We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2) the chair must be a member of the government party. I'm ready to receive motions for the chair.

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): I would like to nominate Andy Fillmore.

[English]

The Clerk: It has been moved by Monsieur Massé that Mr. Fillmore be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair (Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.)): Thank you all very much.

Would you like me to come up?

The Clerk: Of course.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that expression of confidence. I'm most grateful indeed and look forward to the incredible work that lies ahead together. We should move right along to the nomination of the vice-chairs.

The Clerk: Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition. I'm now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): We nominate David Yurdiga for vice-chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Eglinski that Mr. Yurdiga be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Yurdiga duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Some hon members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: Pursuant to standing order 106(2) the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition. I'm now prepared to receive motions for the second vice-chair.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): I nominate Charlie Angus.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Anandasangaree that Mr. Angus be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Angus duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1535)

The Chair: The next order of business for today is to adopt the routine motions. We'll get right into that. I'm just being told that the copies of the motions from the previous Parliament are being distributed.

Committee members may be aware that through PROC and some other work a few minor changes have been made to the routine motions from the last Parliament. The whip's office is going to pass out the edited versions and those will be the motions that we vote on today.

We'll start with the first routine motion. The title is "Services of Analysts from the Library of Parliament".

Is there a mover?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: I so move.

The Chair: Gary moves the motion.

Gary, would you mind reading the motion?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: I move:

That the Committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the Chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist it in its work.

The Chair: Thank you, Gary.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The title of the second routine motion is "Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure".

Rémi.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé: I would like to move the following motion:

[*English*]

That the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be established and be composed of five members, including the chair, the two vice-chairs, and two members of the government; that quorum consist of three members, and each member be allowed to have a staff member present; in addition, each party will be allowed to have a representative present.

The Chair: Thank you, Rémi.

Is there any discussion on this motion? I see none.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The third routine motion is “Reduced Quorum”.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé: I would also like to propose the following:

[*English*]

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 of the opposition and one member of the government.

The Chair: Thank you, Rémi.

Is there any discussion on that motion? I hear none.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is “Distribution of Documents”.

Mike.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): I move:

That only the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the Committee and only when such documents exist in both official languages.

The Chair: Is there any discussion on that one? I see none. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

Mr. Mike Bossio: I'm sorry, but there was something raised earlier this morning in another committee that I was at.

I guess some people can bring in documents if it's at the last minute and they have difficulty getting translation services for the documents. The committee this morning said that it would have it so that all documents had to be in both languages or they would be rejected, except in emergency situations where the committee decides that it wants to see those documents because they are very relevant to the discussion taking place.

I guess I'd like to throw that out there. Does the committee agree with that as well?

• (1540)

The Chair: Charlie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): I believe it is important to maintain the respect of our country's both official languages. That is very important for Parliament.

[*English*]

The Chair: I don't see a sense for that one, Mike. I think we'll just ask for the committee's feeling on the motion as written in that case. Is there any further discussion on that? Is it the will of the committee to adopt it as written—

Jim? I beg your pardon.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: I just wanted to mention that at the earlier meeting that Mr. Bossio was speaking about, it is at the discretion of the chair, I believe, and the group can agree on it at that particular time if a certain circumstance comes up. It doesn't need to be a motion. It can be voted on that day, and the group can decide as a group that they want to get that evidence in.

The Chair: That sounds good, Jim.

As I understand it, unanimous consent would be needed, but I agree with Charlie. It's important that our stated rules require that evidence be in two languages. We can always have a common-sense approach if there's unanimous consent.

Charlie.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I want it clear that it requires unanimous consent as opposed to being voted on; otherwise, we could start to very much undermine how the committees work.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Agreed.

The Chair: Agreed. Thank you.

The next routine motion is “Working Meals”.

Don.

Mr. Don Rusnak (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): I move:

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

The Chair: Is there any discussion on that motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next is “Witnesses' Expenses”.

Mike.

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): I move:

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.

The Chair: Is there any discussion on that one? I see none.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is “Staff at In Camera Meetings”.

Gary.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: I move:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person at an in camera meeting.

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is “In Camera Meetings Transcripts”.

Don.

Mr. Don Rusnak: I move:

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.

The Chair: Thanks, Don. Is there any discussion on that one?

I see none. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next is “Notice of Motions”.

Mike.

Mr. Michael McLeod: Mr. Chairman, I move:

That 48 hours' notice be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the Committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration; and that the notice of motion be filed with the Clerk of the Committee and distributed to members in both official languages.

The Chair: Is there any discussion? I see none.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The final motion is on “Questioning of Witnesses”.

Mike Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I move that the witnesses from an organization be given up to ten minutes, at the discretion of the chair, to make their opening statement; on the rotation of time, for round number one, the first questioner would be Conservative for six minutes, second, Liberal for six minutes, third, NDP for six minutes, fourth, Liberal for six minutes; for the second round, the first questioner would be Liberal for six minutes, second, Conservative for six minutes, third, Liberal for six minutes, fourth, Conservative for five minutes, and fifth, NDP for three minutes, for a total of 50 minutes.

The Chair: Is there any discussion on this motion?

Charlie.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm looking at the motions that were passed by the previous Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, as well as PROC, which had seven minutes in the first round. I don't know where the six minutes came from. In my experience, we haven't had six minutes.

I think it's a mistake to go to six minutes from seven minutes because of what you're trying to establish with witnesses in the first round. That is where a lot of the substantive stuff is broken down and figured out. Then people follow up in the next round. If you don't have that time to go through it in representing your party with the witness, I don't believe you'll get the kind of positive results we've had.

I've also noticed that the way my colleagues the Liberals have set this up, it certainly gives us the raw deal at the end, where we're down to three minutes. I've never been on a committee where the third party was given three minutes to speak. There was always a mandatory minimum of five minutes.

What I see from the previous round is “seven (7) minutes for the 1st round of questioning and thereafter five (5) minutes shall be allocated”. Then the order is broken down according to government, official opposition, and NDP. This seems to be shortchanging on the intent of making us a committee that works in the interests of all members.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thanks, Charlie.

Is there any further discussion?

Mr. Mike Bossio: This was devised in the spirit of fairness, of trying to balance the representation that exists within Parliament, to make it fair to all of the parties in the time allotted to them to ask questions.

You can look at the official status. There are 327 MPs. Of them, 184 are Liberals. They represent 56.3% of the House. The Conservatives represent 30.3%, and the NDP represents 13.5%. Under the proposed time and speaking rotation, the Liberals are now going to have 48% of the time allotted. The Conservatives will have 34% versus their 30% of the representation, and the NDP will have 17% of the time versus 13% of the representation.

Like I said, we're trying to reach that balance, that fairness. We're trying to give.... As well, we thought that in giving the NDP the last voice in the proceedings.... Once again, we're trying to balance that. Yes, it is less time, but in the past, that last block would probably have been divided up more in line with the Conservatives and the Liberals having the majority of that time between them and the other party potentially not having any. We've broken it up into five blocks so we could try to achieve that.

The Chair: Thanks, Mike.

Charlie.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thanks.

I appreciate my honourable colleague wanting to be fair to me by taking 25% of our time away from us and saying, “Don't worry, this is us giving you something.” I certainly wouldn't want to do any financial deals based on that kind of sense of fairness. The standard has been seven minutes in the first round. Now you say that you'll be fair to us and take one minute off the top, and then you say that at the very end we'll get three minutes while everyone else gets five.

The standing pattern has been established by committee, so it seems to me, with all due respect, that with the majority government coming in—and I heard this in the last majority government—it's “we have the majority so now we can establish rules that benefit us”. You have a majority on committee and you can overrule every single thing I say. You never actually even have to listen to your third party.

But if we're going to have a committee that's actually here to do substantive work, then the members who represent the parties have to be able to have the period to do that. I'm not arguing for any more of a spot than what has been the standard and has been established by the PROC committee. To establish the clear norms, the PROC committee is certainly the committee that I would look to.

What I'm being told here is, "Well, don't worry; if we shortchange you, it's actually because we like you." I'm not interested in that notion. I'm interested in what we've had as a standard for MPs to participate in hearings in the 12 years and the five Parliaments that I've been here. The idea that this is somehow a better deal.... This is actually a worse deal.

I'm asking my colleagues—if we're going to start off on a pattern of a collegial and positive working relationship—that either we stick with what we had previously or we look to what we have at PROC, as opposed to this, which is obviously set up to shortchange the NDP.

The Chair: Thank you for that, Charlie.

Jim.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: The Conservatives' stand on this is that those of us who have been in committees before realize that all too often six minutes is just not enough time to get that question around.

I support Charlie's feelings on this. We would like to go with what PROC has agreed on. We feel that it's a very fair time limit. It gives you an opportunity to get your question across, with good time limits. Seven minutes are usually not long enough either, but it's a lot better than six. We would support a change in the motion to follow what PROC had agreed on.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mike.

Mr. Mike Bossio: If you look at what PROC agreed to, it did bump it to seven minutes for the first round, and then it was four blocks of five minutes. On the last one, I've now heard a discrepancy as to whether it was two minutes or three minutes at the end. Once again, the NDP is still sitting in a situation of two or three minutes as the last question at the end of the second round of questioning.

Is that what Charlie is proposing?

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm proposing that we go to seven minutes, which has been the standard—

Mr. Mike Bossio: Right, on the first round.

Mr. Charlie Angus: —in the first round. Having been on committee, I know the last block often gets cut anyway, so it doesn't matter whether it's five minutes or three minutes. I think it's a standard principle that it should be five minutes, because it was always five minutes in the past. That doesn't mean I'm always going to get that, but I certainly find it odd to write it into the standing orders that we're going to ensure I don't get that, so seven minutes, as my colleague says....

For my colleagues who are new, I'm not trying to pull the wool over your eyes here. We're going to be dealing with some very important technical issues that have to be worked through. We can rubber-stamp committee and we can blow through committee, but we're not doing the job that people sent us here to do.

Given the seriousness of the Prime Minister's commitment to this issue of reconciliation in the nation-to-nation relationship, we have to make sure that this is the committee tasked with providing the government with the road map for it, because these are very

complicated issues. I'm certainly not willing to just agree to give up that extra minute. Time is the value that we have here in Parliament to do our work. That is the only currency we have as opposition, because you have a majority.

As I said, you don't have to listen to anything I say. You can overrule everything we do, but the only currency—

Mr. Mike Bossio: We don't want to go down that path—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Sorry, I still have the floor.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Sorry.

Mr. Charlie Angus: The only currency we have in our role as opposition is our ability to use our time well to build a coherent narrative, working with the witnesses who come forward, so that we can bring forward recommendations that at the end of the day I hope will give the government some clear direction on how we actually can unravel some of these Gordian knots of issues that we've dealt with in indigenous affairs for the last 150 years.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I hear you.

I guess my own thoughts would be, though, whether we want to take a minute away from the witnesses and their opening statements. A minute is a minute.

I would say that if you want to go on the route of seven minutes all the way across, with five minutes for the four and two minutes at the end so that the witnesses retain their 10 minutes of opening statement, I don't have an issue with that.

The Chair: Charlie.

Mr. Charlie Angus: It does not say that the witnesses are going to be given less than their 10 minutes. It doesn't say that.

Mr. Mike Bossio: If it's an hour per witness....

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm not asking for that.

What I'm asking for is that it say in the standing orders that we have the rules we've always had. You're suggesting now that by me defending the right of the third party to have proper representation that I'm somehow asking it from the witnesses. There will be times when we might have six witnesses across there, or five witnesses, and there's only going to be one round. We know that. There are other times when there's going to be one witness for that hour period.

I know that when we run out of time, it's always going to be at my expense. I get that. That's the luck of the electoral draw. But what I'm seeing here.... No offence, but I've been in five Parliaments, and sunny ways is only as good as the willingness of the members to actually come through and put it into the standing orders. If the standing orders aren't there, then what I'm seeing is a deliberate attempt to make sure that we are marginalized in our ability to do our job. That's something that will set a very bad tone, I think, for a committee that should be working in a very collegial manner.

I was rather surprised when I saw this. I saw this routine motion adopted by the standing committee in the 41st Parliament had been passed around, and I thought I guess they made a mistake with this new one that the Liberals are passing around and they're reminding us that the previous one worked well enough. But no, it's like the previous thing had worked well enough but we're going to improve it by making sure that we shortchange the NDP.

I like my colleagues on the other side; I think you guys are all great. I don't necessarily trust some of the advice you're getting, but, to me, I'm seeing a bit of spite here for the work we're doing in opposition.

I just really want to get this clear. It's seven minutes in the first round. I don't want it written in the standing orders that I'm down to two minutes in the last round. If the chair cuts me off at two minutes, I accept that because that's the role of the chair, to maintain the clock. The clock is what's going to decide this. But I don't want it in the standing order that if we're working well to the time, it's like, "Hey, you only have two minutes here." That just sets a very, very bad tone on day one.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you for that, Charlie. I'm glad we're having a good discussion on this.

I now have Rémi, Jim, and then David.

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We could discuss this issue for a long time. The approach we have tried to adopt is fair. My colleague Mr. Bossio did a good job of explaining the approach we have adopted to try to achieve balanced representation for each party.

To resolve this situation, we could adopt the rotating schedule of speakers used by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, PROC. I am in favour of the proposal to adopt PROC's schedule, whereby Liberals would take the floor first for seven minutes, followed by the Conservatives for seven minutes, the New Democrats for seven minutes and the Liberals for seven minutes. In the second round, the Conservatives would have five minutes, the Liberals five minutes, the Conservatives five minutes and the Liberals five minutes. Finally, we would wrap up with the New Democrats for two minutes. That is the proposal I am putting forward.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Jim.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: I'd like some verification.

When Mike was speaking, he mentioned two minutes at the end. I believe it's three minutes if we're going to follow through on PROC. It says three minutes at the end for the NDP.

I just want clarification for my friend.

Mr. Rémi Massé: Yes, I think there is a mistake. We are allowed up to 50 minutes, so if we put three minutes, it would bring us to 51. I'm sure there was a mistake there. It's supposed to be two minutes.

The Chair: We're going to get to David, but I'm checking with the clerk and we could go to 51 minutes. That's no problem. We could set the time as we see fit, and if it's the committee's—

Mr. Jim Eglinski: I think in fairness it would be good to give them that opportunity.

Mr. Rémi Massé: We're good.

The Chair: Okay.

David.

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to start off our committee in a sense of co-operation. I understand that two minutes isn't a lot of time, especially when you represent your community. Obviously we all have communities that want to be represented. I like the suggestion that we be more fair. I think your suggestion is noteworthy and the right way to go.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any other discussion before I ask the question?

Go ahead, Charlie.

Mr. Charlie Angus: What is the question you're asking? Do we have a proposal? Can we read that proposal? Is that the question you're talking about it, or are we talking about the original one, because before I vote on anything, I want to know what I'm... I don't want to make a mistake here.

The Chair: My question to you, Charlie, is this. Are you proposing an amendment to the motion? Then, can you be specific about what that amendment is? Then I want to test the committee's appetite to amend the motion.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I would say we adopt the motion that was in the previous committee. It worked well then. I never heard that there was an unacceptable problem, and again if time runs out, time runs out, and guess who's going to pay. Therefore, I move:

That the witnesses from an organization be given up to ten (10) minutes at the discretion of the Chair to make their opening statement. During the questioning of the witnesses, there shall be allocated seven (7) minutes for the 1st round of questioning and thereafter five (5) minutes shall be allocated to each questioner in the 2nd and subsequent rounds of questioning. That the order of questions for the first round be as follows—

You have NDP first there. I don't mind being moved back to...

The Chair: From that point on, go in that order, then we're in the ballpark.

Mr. Charlie Angus: It would be Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Liberal in the first round. In the second round, it would be Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, NDP. Those would be five-minute rounds at the discretion of the chair.

The Chair: Okay, Charlie, that adds up to 51, and that's within our purview to make that change. We have an amendment to the motion on the table, and I would like to ask the... Oh, that is three in the final slot for NDP, for fairness, to reflect what PROC had recommended.

Very good. That adds up to 51 minutes: seven on top, five on the bottom, with three in the last line.

Is it the committee's pleasure to adopt that amendment to the motion? Is there any dissent?

•(1600)

Mr. Michael McLeod: [*Inaudible—Editor*] importance we're going to put into one minute. In all fairness, with the amount of time, Charlie's going to have an awful lot of time to speak. He's the only representative. The rest of us are going to be dividing this time up.

I know he feels he is being shortchanged, but by granting more time, I think the rest of us are going to feel a little bit shortchanged too. I know this is historically the way it was done, but how many people do we have sitting around the table? And there's one person.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I think my honourable colleague raises an excellent question. I don't mind talking about this all night. If we want to talk about consensus, or we want to talk about an alternative way of sitting around the table, I'll talk all night about it.

It doesn't really matter to me how the Liberals divide up their time. It really doesn't matter to me. You have a majority. You could be the main speaker on a question, and you could be the second speaker. It doesn't matter to me.

What matters to me is that we respect the standing traditions that allow the opposition parties their places. We might not be comfortable with that. That's a great discussion. As I said, I'm not going anywhere. I'll sit and talk about it. I'll talk about all possible alternatives.

But with the idea that you're going to use your majority to tell me you're not comfortable with the New Democrats getting a chance to speak, we're going to have issues, and I don't want to have issues. I want us to work collegially. I care passionately about these issues.

I came into politics to talk on behalf of the communities I represent that have been screwed over and ripped off and denied basic services for years, and I'm not going to give up that extra two minutes to be more collegial to a party that has a very large majority and who can override me anytime they want.

I thought we had voted. Did we not vote?

The Chair: It was unclear, so I want to go back to a show of hands.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Do we have motion? I'm willing to vote on the motion. If you want to not vote on the motion and discuss your idea of consensus, fair enough. We can discuss that.

I think we should vote on the motion and test the room. If not, we'll go to your idea, and then we'll see how that goes.

The Chair: Is there a consensus that the committee wants to adopt the amendment to the motion? Let's have a show of hands.

Michael, do you want to have some words on that?

Mr. Michael McLeod: I'm just making the point, Mr. Chairman, that Mr. Angus is making the point that he needs more time for his party. Granted, that's something that was done historically.

I'm saying that, in fairness, he's one individual who's going to have a lot more time than I'm going to have every time we have a go around, so where's the fairness in that? I don't have the luxury of

being around as many committees as he has. I have to take his word that this is the way it will be.

The Chair: I understand your point, Mike.

I think there's a certain logic to each of the positions, but in the end, we're talking about the party, really, not the individual here, and the time should be reflected that way. I'm sympathetic to that point of view myself; but we'll find out, in a moment, with a show of hands.

Mike.

Mr. Mike Bossio: A great amount of deliberation was given to this format that was developed for the questioning of witnesses, but it doesn't have to stand forever, either. The committee can decide. You can test this format, see how it works, test the waters, and after a few months say that six minutes just isn't time to talk to people; we need seven minutes, more time in order to really explore the serious nature of these issues. This isn't written in stone. This is something that, once again, was given deliberation to.

I understand Michael's concerns that one individual on the other side would have more time. I get that. At the same time, we are trying to establish a different tone as to how our government will work. Maybe right now we go the way that Charlie wants it, and then in three months we could say, you know, this isn't fair and it's not the way we want this to work. The committee at that time could revisit it and determine that they want to go in a different direction.

•(1605)

The Chair: Thanks for that, Mike.

I want to wrap up the conversation on this one, if I can.

Are there any final comments, Charlie?

Mr. Charlie Angus: I don't know what we're talking about now. We're talking about consensus. My colleague Mr. Bossio is talking about going to six minutes and revisiting it in three months, and talking about seven minutes and revisiting it in three months, so I don't know—

Mr. Mike Bossio: I'm saying both of them.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I don't want to sound like a cranky old guy from the Old Testament days of back in 2004, and 2006, and 2008, and 2011, but I have to say that I have never been on a committee that ever went back and looked at the standing orders once they adopted them. Once you've adopted the standing orders, they are in stone.

That's why I am being so difficult. I don't want to be difficult. I want to work collegially with you guys, but I have to remind my colleagues that once these rules are in, that becomes the operating standard culture.

I'm not here as an individual. I'm here representing the New Democratic Party, the third party. There are standards in the Westminster tradition of how we establish the places that each party has in the standing rules so that there is fairness, so that you don't get squashed like a bug just because there's a supermajority and now we're all in the same thing together, because we know we're not. My colleagues are there to represent the interests of the government. They will do that. They will do that faithfully and honourably, I'm sure. My job is to represent the interests of the New Democratic Party, to make sure our interests are brought forward on legislation, on reviews, and we bring that clear counter-voice.

I don't want to talk about this forever. I'd like to get to a vote. I thought we had a motion. I put forward a motion. If we don't want to do that motion, we can talk about other options, but as I said, we could talk about this forever. I'm not a very good skater, but man I can talk. I never get tired talking.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

By the way, we don't need 100% consensus to pass an amendment or a motion. It's majority.

We'll call that question again in a moment, but first, Gary.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: We [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] what PROC had agreed to. I know there was extensive discussion at that committee. All parties were represented. There was a fair and equitable distribution of time.

In fairness to the work that they did and the consistency that I think would exist in all the committees, I would revert to their actual decision and follow the protocol they set for all the committees.

The Chair: Okay.

You're supporting in spirit what Charlie is saying. The order is different, so it's a little bit different from PROC, but it's the same spirit as PROC.

We'll have a final comment from Rémi, and then we'll call the question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will be very frank. I'm very proud to be here because I represent my riding's aboriginal communities—Mi'kmaq communities that have suffered from various decisions over the past few years. We could discuss this for hours, but I think we are here to do a job, to support our aboriginal communities that need help on and off reserve.

That is the last comment I wanted to make. I think that the PROC suggestion is solid, and it is very clear. I propose that this motion be adopted as quickly as possible, so that we can move on to the real interests of our constituents and our aboriginal communities.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, for that.

The amendment on the floor is seven minutes on the top half and five on the bottom half, with three in the final row for the NDP.

Can we see if there's support for Charlie's amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Now we have to vote on the amended motion. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the amended motion?

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

The Chair: Before we move to adjournment, which we'll do in a couple of minutes, I'd like to put in a placeholder and create an agenda item for our next meeting, which will be committee business. I invite committee members to think, over the recess that we're facing now, about what kind of work you'd like to work on and address during this committee and what information you might like to have presented to this committee. We'll speak in the round when we get back together after the recess, and that will determine our next moves.

Before I call for the motion of adjournment, Don...?

• (1610)

Mr. Don Rusnak: It was suggested to me that because we're doing work that affects indigenous communities across the country so greatly—and as Charlie so eloquently said they have suffered, and Rémi also said, under years of bad decisions from our federal government—we should be more inclusive of first nations and indigenous communities, and have a motion that all of our meetings... I don't know if all of the meetings are webcast or broadcast, but because of the people that we represent all of our meetings should be webcast or televised.

Charlie has a lot of remote communities. I have some remote communities, although they all have road access. I'm sure that Rémi has remote communities. We're doing important work here for these communities, and I think they should see what's happening here.

The Chair: Thanks, Don. That's a very reasonable suggestion. I'm just speaking with the clerk and I'm told that for all meetings, by a matter of course, the audio is broadcast. There are only three rooms that have video, so what I'm hearing is that we can make every effort to get those rooms, but we can't guarantee they'll all be video broadcast. However, they will be audio broadcast on the website.

Let's have some conversation. Gary.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: It's another point altogether. Do we have to appoint the subcommittee on agenda and procedure today?

The Chair: We do, and it was one of the earlier motions.

Actually, we need to name the two members. Thank you for raising that. Let's come back to that. I guess we were a bit hasty in talking about the motion to adjourn, but let's finish up with Don's point.

If you'd like to phrase it as a motion, let's do it.

Mr. Don Rusnak: Then it will give you the ability to go to—

The Chair: Yes, very good. Let's say the motion that Don is moving is to ensure the audio of all committee meetings is broadcast on the web, and that every effort will be made to broadcast the video as well.

Does that sound right? Is there discussion on that?

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm glad we have a motion. I think what we might want to do is sit down, maybe when we do the subcommittee meeting, and talk about possibilities for engagement.

We have to think outside the box a bit, because we're going to deal with the architecture of the rooms. There are certain rooms that have video feeds and certain rooms that don't. How do we make it so that more of the communities can feel like they know what's going on? We're going to be talking about stuff they should be feeling a part of.

Whether we do some live tweets of the events, or just start to try to work with overall budgets in a way that we actually get into some of the communities to hold some of these hearings, it would be really powerful to be in some of the communities and bring these issues to them.

It's going to be complicated. It's not something that I would suggest we could put into a formal motion, because we're going to have to figure it out on a case-by-case basis. If we sit down and try to put our heads together to try to make this committee the open committee, the committee that represents and responds to the issues we're hearing about, I think we'll all be a lot more credible in the work we're doing.

I agree with the motion. I totally support it, but I think we do need a conversation of how to go about this more informal conversation that we can then bring back to the larger membership of the committee to say, "These are some suggestions."

The Chair: Okay, I think the motion sets a nice baseline that I'm sure we can approve today. Then what you're talking about, broader outreach and engagement, is a good topic for when we come back after the break.

Is it on Don's motion?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé: It's a proposal about subcommittee membership.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is the committee in favour of adopting Don's motion on broadcasting?

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

The Chair: Then Gary brought up the committee composition.

Did you have any more to say, or will we go to Rémi on that point?

Arnold, is your point on committee composition?

•(1615)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Yes.

The Chair: Then I beg your pardon, Rémi, Arnold has a view, so let's hear from Arnold.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Thank you, Chairman.

We may want to meet as a committee of the whole for our first meeting to discuss these things before we actually put this into the subcommittee. That would be my recommendation, that we meet as a committee of the whole next time to discuss what will be allowed to be discussed at our meetings, and then at that meeting put the

smaller committee together, after we've discussed some of the topics that we will be covering.

That's my suggestion.

The Chair: Arnold is suggesting that we not name names today. That's good.

Let's go to Rémi.

Mr. Rémi Massé: I'm fine about discussing the subjects that we'd be discussing during the committee, but I'd be proposing to name the members and get rid of that and it would be solved.

The Chair: Without getting into content, just name the names.

Mr. Rémi Massé: Correct.

The Chair: That's certainly an efficient thing to do while we're all together.

Mr. Rémi Massé: I'm proposing two members, and they would be Don Rusnak and Gary—I don't want to pronounce his last name because I won't be able to.

The Chair: Okay, we have a motion on the floor and there's some discussion.

Michael.

Mr. Michael McLeod: I have a question, and it's not specific to this. I'm trying to make a comment on being more inclusive and trying to involve the general public. I'm just wondering what the rules are around being more inclusive, bringing aboriginal people to the table in subcommittees or in this committee, or bringing in people with expertise who could talk to us or advise us about aboriginal issues.

I don't have a strategy and I don't have anybody in mind, but how rigidly is the door closed on this? Can we have somebody sitting with us? Can we have people on our committee who don't necessarily sit on this committee? My understanding is that we have some flexibility there and we could bring in other people.

The Chair: Thank you.

As far as the subcommittee, it's really just a planning committee. What you're raising, I think, wouldn't impact the planning committee or the subcommittee, so let's separate that. The question is for the broader committee. While I think we have leeway to do what we like...and I'm told that there have been in the past, or perhaps it's our usual practice, that there be—

A voice: It's not usual.

The Chair: But it has happened in the past.

A voice: It has happened in the past.

The Chair: There have been ex officio members from indigenous communities on the committee.

I think I'd like to put that one into the bucket of committee business. We're going to talk about what that might look like and make sure we get some really good ideas on how to make that happen.

Mr. Michael McLeod: I have a follow-up question to that very point. I would like to know more about it. If I could maybe get some of the rules around that.... As I said before, I don't have a strategy for it, but I think if we're going to be more collaborative and talk about aboriginal people, it's better to have some expertise, some people sitting here advising us, talking with us.

The Chair: Great. It's an excellent point, Mike. We can ask the clerk to bring us a little information when we meet next around what the sandbox is that we can operate in.

I see your hand, Charlie, but is there somebody else on this?

Okay. Charlie, please.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have just a technical issue on the subcommittee, and I will leave it to my colleagues on the government side to decide what they want to do.

I found with the vast majority of committees I sat on that we were a lot more effective in dealing with committee business as a committee. The idea of a subcommittee, where there are two from the government side—one and one—is always promoted as a more efficient way or that we can get through a lot of stuff. There may be reasons for when you want to do that, but I find that if we just take 15 minutes at the end of a meeting sometimes and we talk committee business.... I don't have a problem if it's all around the table.

I've been on many committees where we've had a very good working relationship by just saying, "Business is coming up, so let's prioritize. You want to study this and we all agree, so let's build a calendar." We hear from the chair and they come back and we move on. I'm willing to work that way if people are interested.

The Chair: Well, Charlie, we've already adopted the motion of the smaller subcommittee.

I think what we're really asking now is to get the names set up. There are two spots, two names that need to be named, if I'm reading this correctly. There are two members from the government. The motion is on the table. They are Don and Gary.

Mike, please speak briefly on the motion.

• (1620)

Mr. Mike Bossio: Once again, speaking to Charlie's point, this is the indigenous affairs committee. We need to be able to reach consensus amongst ourselves if we're going to try to reach consensus with our indigenous communities as well. We all need to be on the same page and in agreement that we're trying to bring about the greater good for those concerned.

I certainly don't have a problem with starting off as a committee of the whole, seeing how that works, and if we did want to go to subcommittee later on, we could revisit that. That is my view.

The Chair: Thanks, Mike. I appreciate your flexible thinking on that.

I will be flexible too, but just in the reverse order. I'd like us to start with the subcommittee, and if we find that voices are missing or if there is any friction created there, we could revisit that and go to a committee of the whole at that time, which is, in fact, what we have adopted already.

I'll go back to the names, if I could. We have two names. Is it the committee's pleasure to appoint those two folks to the two open government positions?

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

The Chair: I think we're ready for our motion for adjournment, unless there are any last thoughts.

Thank you all for your patience and the excellent conversation today.

May I have a motion to adjourn? It's moved by Gary and seconded by Mike.

We're adjourned. Thank you.

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