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# Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 001**

Tuesday, February 18, 2020

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Chair: Mr. Pat Finnigan





## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Tuesday, February 18, 2020

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

**The Clerk:** Honourable members of the committee, I see that a quorum is present.

I must inform you that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. She cannot receive any other motions, hear points of order or participate in debate.

We can therefore proceed with the election of the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the governing party.

I am ready to receive nominations for the position of chair.

[*English*]

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** I'll nominate Mr. Finnigan for a second time.

[*Translation*]

**The Clerk:** It is moved by Mr. Drouin that Mr. Finnigan be elected chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

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

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

**The Clerk:** I invite Mr. Finnigan to take the chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.):** I thank you all for your trust.

[*English*]

I'm really honoured to be elected again as chair. I see some familiar faces and some that are new. I'm really excited. We have some great people around the table.

[*Translation*]

Several of the people around the table are very familiar with the agricultural environment and procedures. I'm very happy to be with all of you today.

With those words, I call upon the clerk to proceed with the election of the vice-chairs.

[*English*]

**The Clerk:** Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

I am now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

Ms. Rood.

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** I'd like to nominate John Barlow, please.

**The Clerk:** Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried and Mr. Barlow 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 am now prepared to receive motions for the second vice-chair.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** I nominate Mr. Yves Perron.

[*English*]

**The Clerk:** Are there any further motions?

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** I'd like to propose Mr. MacGregor.

**The Clerk:** Since more than one candidate has been nominated, pursuant to Standing Order 106(3), I am required to preside over the election of the second vice-chair by secret ballot.

Before proceeding, I will very briefly explain the process. My colleague, who is a procedural clerk of the House of Commons, will distribute a ballot to each member of the committee. You have to clearly indicate your choice by printing, in block letters, the first and last names of the candidate on the ballot and deposit it in the box. We will then count the votes and announce the name of the successful candidate.

If no candidate receives a majority of the votes, another ballot will have to be conducted in the same manner.

Allow me to repeat the names of the candidates nominated. We have Mr. Yves Perron and Mr. Alistair MacGregor nominated for second vice-chair.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Do we have to say something, or do things proceed automatically?

**The Clerk:** Usually people don't say anything, but if...

**Mr. Yves Perron:** That's fine. I just wondered.

• (1540)

[English]

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

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

**The Chair:** On the agenda, that was the main business, but we're all here and I think there are other housekeeping things we should look at. If it is the will of the committee, we can proceed with those.

[Translation]

Do you have something to say, Mr. Drouin?

[English]

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Mr. Chair, I do have routine motions that we would like to move. I think there has been agreement amongst all parties. I don't expect any shenanigans to happen here.

[Translation]

I would just like to move them. Indeed, to expedite things, I will give the clerk copies of these motions in both French and English, so that they can be distributed.

[English]

**The Chair:** Should we go through the routine motions and adopt whether we want the time that it takes before you can present the motion and all of that...? There are several things. I think if we had that in place and policies in place that we can refer to.... If it's the will of the committee, we would go over this and consider it.

Would that be okay with you, Francis?

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Well, we can go through them one by one, or if somebody has objections they can raise them now. Otherwise, we can include them all in voting on them in blocks.

**The Chair:** Okay.

[Translation]

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** I am sure our friend from the Bloc will agree that we should take a block vote on these motions.

**Mr. Yves Perron:** I usually do agree.

[English]

**The Chair:** That's my mistake. I thought it was another motion. We're talking about the same thing.

Okay. As you can see in the document, I think these are basically similar to what we had the last time. I can give you the exact details of the last ones if you wish, but these are very similar, and I think they're very close to how many committees operate. Do you have any questions or comments?

Mr. MacGregor.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** I have a slight amendment to the quorum section if you're entertaining amendments right now, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes. Go ahead.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** It's about the fact that our committee now has three opposition parties. Under "Reduced Quorum", mention is made of "one member of the opposition and one member of the government". Given that there are three opposition parties, to which one of us would it fall?

I would like to make a slight amendment to the wording. I'll read it into the record. The new motion would read:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four (4) members are present, including two (2) members from the opposition and two (2) members from the government; and that in the case of previously scheduled meetings taking place outside of the Parliamentary Precinct, the Committee members in attendance be required to wait for 15 minutes following the designated start of the meeting before they may proceed to hear witnesses and hear evidence, regardless of whether opposition or government members are present.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Is there discussion or are there any comments on the proposed motion?

Mr. Drouin.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Yes. We're okay with that.

**The Chair:** Are there any other questions or comments? No?

We have to vote on the amendment to the motion first. If everybody agrees, then we won't have to revert to the original motion.

Is it the will of the committee to accept the amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

**The Chair:** Okay. We'll go with that.

[Translation]

Mr. Perron, do you have a question?

**Mr. Yves Perron:** Yes; it's a technical question.

In the copy I had, the part that concerned the members was in a shaded area. I wasn't sure whether this was part of the routine motions. Now it is included. This means that if independent members were to sit, this part would apply.

Mr. Drouin, you are suggesting that we adopt these motions as a whole. Is that correct?

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Yes.

[English]

**The Chair:** Are there any other comments or questions on the routine motions that have been presented?

We're all good? Okay. With that, are we ready to adopt the routine motions as presented and amended?

(Motions agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

**The Chair:** That's good.

Within the routine motions, we also have this one:

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.

I would invite the analysts to take their chairs. We have three analysts.

[*Translation*]

There is one we know quite well. I want to welcome you all.

[*English*]

The analysts provide such great work. They're here to record everything, and when we have a study, they come up with a draft. They're fantastic people, and I really admire the work they perform for us. We appreciate having them here.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to introduce the clerk.

Could you introduce yourself?

• (1550)

**The Clerk:** My name is Aimée Belmore. I am the clerk of the committee.

**The Chair:** You also have an assistant, correct?

[*English*]

**Ms. Erica Pereira (Committee Researcher):** My name is Eric Pereira. I'm the clerk of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. I'm just here as support today.

**The Chair:** I'll just say that they are here at the service of everyone if you have any questions. They're non-partisan. They're here to help the committee carry out its business.

[*Translation*]

So, never hesitate to contact the analysts or the clerk.

[*English*]

That completes the agenda as far as housekeeping issues go, but we can entertain any discussion that you want to carry on. We usually have two hours. I'm open to any discussion.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** I have one comment, Mr. Chair, and it's in the spirit of time that I'm saying this. I would seek the advice of my colleagues on the other side.

The international trade committee recently passed motions, and I'm assuming you will be getting a letter fairly shortly, with regard to clauses 44, 46, 53 and 59 of CUSMA. They require us to have a report or a letter back to the committee by four o'clock on Tuesday.

Does this committee want to have witnesses appear in a short time frame on Thursday or do we want to just not respond and let the international trade committee carry the brunt of CUSMA? I'm asking committee members what their thoughts are.

**The Chair:** I guess this is our only chance if we want to have any input—

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Well—

**The Chair:** —but anyway, I'll let members comment on this.

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Yes. For us, obviously we would want to take a look at it. Most of us have already read it, but we've certainly had feedback from stakeholders who want us to do our due diligence, and I think that's one of this committee's roles. When these types of things come through and do have an impact on agriculture and agri-food, it falls upon us to give them a review.

I agree with Francis that it doesn't give us a ton of time, but at least it's a meeting for us to have a discussion. I know that all of us could get a couple of witnesses who are here on the precinct. My suggestion would be that the witnesses should be ones who have not already presented at the trade committee so that we're not duplicating already covered territory. I'm assuming that we could easily get the witness list of the trade committee, but for us, I suggest that we meet on Thursday to discuss the new agreement, the new NAF-TA, and its impact on agriculture, for two hours, with maybe six witnesses. We can have that discussion.

**The Chair:** Yes. Just to book the witnesses, time is of the essence for sure. Do we want to also have government witnesses? It's up to the committee as to whom we want to have.

**Mr. John Barlow:** I certainly think it wouldn't hurt to have Ag Canada here, or Tom Rosser, or somebody who is well versed on what the impacts will be.

**The Chair:** I can ask, certainly.

Kody.

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would certainly echo the comments of the committee members who have spoken to this, and I would also say that we need to make sure that when we are holding this discussion and conversation on Thursday, we hear from a broad swath of the different industries that may be impacted, either positively or negatively, just to take a look at the many different industries within agriculture.

**The Chair:** Time is of the essence. I guess I could ask everyone on the committee to forward information today, if you could, on anyone that you think would bring some good information to our committee and our study.

Monsieur Perron.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron:** We have very little time to examine this matter. Could we ask the Standing Committee on International Trade to give us some more time? Is that possible?

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

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** The problem is that the motion has already been adopted by this committee. We haven't received his letter yet. That would have been sent to us. By the time we receive it and send it back.... Other committees are in the same boat as we are, including the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology and the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, to name a few. That is the time frame we were given.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. MacGregor.

• (1555)

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Perhaps this is a question for our clerk. Given the time constraints we're under and the logistics of getting witnesses before us, is the end-of-day today when you need those in, 4 p.m. or 5 p.m.?

**The Clerk:** The more notice we get, the better off we are, but how ready your witnesses are to come to committee certainly influences things.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Mr. Barlow.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Just to Mr. Perron's concern, I'm wondering if the committee would agree to extend the hours on Thursday, maybe for an additional hour or two. For us this is important. We can't change the agreement, but I think this is an opportunity for us to highlight positives and negatives that could be part of CUSMA. For something of this magnitude, I'm more than willing to sit a couple of extra hours, again at the will of the committee, if everyone else is willing to do that, including our clerk.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Do committee members want to extend meeting hours to allow more time? Would an extra hour be convenient for you?

[English]

Would that be enough? Is everybody available for an extra hour? Are we willing to extend for an hour?

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** We could do an hour. We may need that extra hour anyway if we're going to send a letter back to the committee.

**The Chair:** We may need it to draft a letter.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** That depends on whether or not we can, on such short notice, even fill that time. I know we will need some time to work out what we as a committee want to send back to international trade.

**The Chair:** If we agree, you can find a substitute if you can't sit. That's the other option we can also look at.

Mr. Barlow.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Thanks.

To Mr. Drouin's comment, maybe it could even be that after that the subcommittee of the vice-chairs and the chair could get together and draft that letter rather than making everyone else stay. I do see some heads shaking. We were all elected here to do a job. I would love to go home as well, but this is very important. I think it behooves us to make sure we do our due diligence with this.

**The Chair:** Do we have consensus to extend it? Are there any comments?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Perron:** I agree.

[English]

**The Chair:** We will extend by one hour. Again, if you can't sit, you can find someone. You don't have to have a delegate. Anybody can find a substitute.

**Mr. John Barlow:** There will be lots of people interested.

**The Chair:** I'm sure there will be.

That's great. We will proceed with that.

We could do this in different ways. We could bring in departmental officials to brief us on the framework of CUSMA and then do two hours with other witnesses. Would that be something...? Some of us are more up to date than others. That would give the officials a chance to describe what the agreement is all about. After that, we could question the witnesses. I'm just throwing that out. Then we'd have to notify the department.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Mr. Chair, I think that is a good idea to keep everybody up to date on what's happening. Having the officials in first is a good lead-in to having the witnesses so that we will be well briefed and we will have some good questions, and maybe answers, for our stakeholders as well.

**The Chair:** Is that okay with everyone?

Okay. We'll ask the department to come in for an hour and then we'll get witnesses.

Again, send in the names of any witnesses you want. How many do you think we should have? In two hours we usually have three or four maximum?

**Mr. John Barlow:** We could have six to eight at the most.

**The Chair:** We'll have six to eight at the most. Send in all the names you want, and then we'll exchange—

**Mr. John Barlow:** I'm assuming most of them will overlap anyway.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** There will be overlapping, yes.

**The Chair:** Also rank them in order of importance. If you have three, give your numbers one, two, and three so that it's a lot easier for the clerk to....

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** We've already said that those who have appeared in front of international trade we will not bring back, so we have agreement that the clerk, if we mistakenly—

• (1600)

**Mr. John Barlow:** Do we know who is on their list of witnesses who may still come?

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** No, we don't, but perhaps the clerk could reach out to the other clerk if that's an issue.

**Mr. John Barlow:** If we have them first, then trade may do the same and not bring them back for theirs.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay, so it looks as though we have our day scheduled for Thursday. As I said, I know some notices of motion have been put forward. The earlier we get those, the better. Then we'll have to sit down. We have 27 weeks, give or take, depending on how quickly we break in June. That seems like a lot, but it's not a whole lot. I was looking at one motion that asked for six meetings. We're already taking six, plus drafting the report and all that. That also takes time.

Again, following the same idea, rank your motions in their order of importance to you, and then we can sit down and say which one is urgent, and we'll do that one first. Sometimes we can start on a second one, too, because the first one is stuck somewhere.

I open the floor if you want to discuss motions and priority further.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Obviously, Mr. Chair, the impact of the carbon tax on agriculture, I think, is front of mind. I have spoken to many of my colleagues around the table here about that. That will be our number one priority. We've given a few other notices of motion as well. I would table my motion that, after the CUSMA review, our first study be on the impact—positives and negatives. As I've worded the motion, I also think it's an opportunity for us to highlight some of the conservation, carbon sequestration and other such things that already happen in agriculture, which maybe we don't talk enough about. I would suggest that would be our first study after the CUSMA review.

**The Chair:** Could you all send me your motions and just a brief description of what you want to study? We can share them. At the end of the day, it will be the committee that decides. Some of them will probably be very similar or the same. Please prioritize your motions and forward all of them to the clerk. If you have 10, that's fine. Send them along. We never know. The last one might get done. Prioritize them, and then, as a committee, we'll decide. There will be give and take, and there will be negotiations as to which one we'll do first.

Would that be acceptable to everyone?

Mr. Blois.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Mr. Chair, that sounds quite reasonable. I've had the chance to see some of the notices of motion that were tabled by my Conservative colleagues. There is some interplay in

terms of what I think would be important as well, so perhaps there's an opportunity to have everyone, as you mentioned, bring those forward and we can decide on the best practice moving forward.

**The Chair:** It probably won't be at the next meeting, because we have a full agenda for that, but I can get the clerk to put a sheet together. Then we can sit down afterwards, probably next Tuesday, and we can decide and get the work started on that.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Just on that, on the trade committee, if we do set it aside as a subcommittee to do that letter after Thursday, would we have time to bring that letter here for the entire committee to see before it has to go to the trade committee on Tuesday?

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** John, you'll remember what we did in the past. We often sent the letter around to committee members when we had time-tight deadlines.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Then they just gave us feedback.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Yes. We would have an opportunity for 15 minutes on Tuesday. It's due by four o'clock.

**Mr. John Barlow:** By four o'clock? Okay. I wasn't sure of the time. It'll be over the weekend or whatever...

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Yes, that's what I would suggest, to allow time for the analysts. We can send some guidance on Thursday to the analysts and they can draft it. Then, maybe on Monday at five o'clock, we can give our stamp of approval.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Yes. Okay.

• (1605)

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Via email, do you think?

**The Chair:** It's either that or take five minutes on Thursday at the end.

**Mr. John Barlow:** No.

**The Chair:** No? Okay. We'll do it on Tuesday.

Do we want to strike a subcommittee? Not every committee has a subcommittee. If we do, we could decide how....

That's fine. Is there anything else?

**Mr. John Barlow:** I move that we adjourn, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** There you go. You've moved to adjourn.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** I'll second that.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. It's been a great meeting.







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