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Chair: Ms. Ruby Sahota



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• (1110)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.)): It's finally the day when we start our draft report, so I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 15 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, April 11, the committee is meeting to discuss parliamentary duties in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before we start, I want to inform the members that pursuant to this order of reference the committee is meeting for two reasons: one, for the purpose of undertaking a study and receiving evidence concerning matters related to the context of parliamentary duties in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; and two, to prepare and present a report to the House of Commons by May 15 on the said study. The order of reference also stipulates that only motions needed to determine witnesses or motions related to the adoption of the report are in order.

Today's meeting is taking place by video conference, and the proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. Just so you are aware, the webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee. In order to facilitate the work of our interpreters and ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

First, interpretation in the video conference will work very much like it does in a regular committee meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of... Well, I guess since we've had some issues with this, you really only have the choice of either English or French, so alternate your choice depending on the language you wish to speak. If you alternate the language you wish to speak in the middle of your statement, please also change the channel at the bottom for the best interpretation results.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When you are ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate your mike.

I have a reminder that all comments by members should be addressed through the chair. Should the members need to request the floor outside of their designated time for questions—this doesn't really apply this time, since we don't have any witnesses—just for this meeting, please, we should raise our hands. I'll try to follow the side panel for raised hands whenever there is an issue as we go through the report.

When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. Also, if there's a point of order to be made, once again, just unmute your mike and state that you have a point of order. If anyone wants to respond to that point of order, please use the “raised hand” function under the participant toolbar. When you're not speaking, make sure that your mike is on mute. This will be especially important today as well, since we're all probably going to want to make comments on the report.

Should any technical challenges arise—for example, in relation to interpretation or a problem with your audio—please advise me immediately. The technical team will help to resolve the problem. We may need to suspend during that time. It would be a short suspension, but please let me know so that everyone can participate fully.

Before we get started, I'd like everyone to click on the screen at the top right-hand corner to ensure you are on gallery view so that you're able to see each other.

I have a few reminders. All comments should be addressed through the chair. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you're not speaking, please keep your mike on mute. Also, the use of headsets is strongly encouraged.

Welcome, Mr. Richards. I'm glad you were able to solve your technical difficulty and join us. We are just getting started.

We will turn our attention now to the consideration of our draft report. Usually we do this work in camera; however, the authority granted to PROC by the House on April 11 requires that all committees meeting virtually be webcast to the public on ParlVU.

To remind members, we have two meetings, today and May 12, to consider this report and to adopt it if we are to meet the deadline of May 15, which the House gave us. The draft report covers all meetings up until our April 30 meeting.

I'm in your hands. How you want to consider the report and how you want to go about it is really up to the committee. I was wondering if first we could get agreement on this, since you've probably seen and had a chance to read through the report. We have three hours in today's meeting as well, so we can go as slowly as you want in order to go through the report together. We can go line by line, paragraph by paragraph or section by section.

I'm wondering if anybody has any suggestions as to how we go through it.

Mr. Richards.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Maybe you've addressed this; I don't know. Obviously with the challenges I was having, I missed the beginning.

It's my understanding that the meeting is public. I understand that, despite some of what we were told during the hearings, there are challenges with being able to have in camera proceedings. However, usually when we consider a draft report we are in camera. There's a good reason for that, yet it's not possible.

Where are we with that? I have some concerns about it. That's usually how we do things and we're not able to. I guess that points out one of the challenges there is with this, and it's probably something we need to address in our report. Having said that, we're also going to be talking about the report in public as well.

I don't know if you've addressed this already, Madam Chair, but it's a concern I have. I don't know if others feel the same way.

The Chair: I merely stated in my introductory remarks that pursuant to the order of reference of May 11, this committee was required to hold all of its meetings in public and make them publicly available via webcast on ParlVU. This committee, just as with all the committee meetings we've had with witnesses, will be publicly available.

Mr. Blake Richards: Has the House actually directed the committee to do its report in public as well?

The Chair: That is correct.

Mr. Blake Richards: Does anyone know the rationale for that? That is not a typical thing in committees, so I'm just curious.

The Chair: No, it's not. As far as I know, the rationale or at least a piece of the rationale—and I can't completely know the entire thought process behind this—is that there may not be a way of ensuring that we are completely 100% in camera. When we are present in the room, we can ensure this by looking around the room. Of course, even at that point somebody could have their phone on or whatnot, so perhaps we can never be 100% sure, but for the most part it is easier for the blind eye to ensure it. Here it's not easy, so they've made sure all committee meetings are publicly available and none of them are in camera at this point, until they've figured out the technology.

This was also from April 11. We studied this issue and perhaps we can make recommendations in this report to address, going forward, how committees can have in camera meetings.

• (1115)

Mr. Blake Richards: That's what I was going to suggest next. Given that, probably... Unfortunately, we only received the report late yesterday and I didn't have a chance to go through it, although I did skim through parts of it. Maybe it's addressed in there already and I didn't see it. If it's not, we certainly should be addressing that in our report. Obviously there are times when in camera proceedings are needed. We almost ran into one of them during our last meeting, in fact. How does that get addressed? Obviously that's a significant concern that we need to address in our report.

I would suggest, unless there's disagreement, that we instruct our analyst to prepare a section on this for the report. It doesn't have to be a long section, but it should address that and the concerns that

exist about it. It probably even needs a recommendation of some kind, but to me it's one obvious thing we should try to address.

The Chair: Are there any comments from other committee members on that suggestion or general comments before we actually go through the report paragraph by paragraph?

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Chair, I have a question more than a comment. Has this draft report been published publicly?

The Chair: No. As far as I know, this report, from the email the clerk sent us—

Mr. John Brassard: It's confidential.

The Chair: It stated that the report was confidentially sent to us. At this point we are going through it, and whether we go through it line by line and I read it out, or we just discuss the paragraphs in general, some parts of it will become public as this meeting proceeds. Then eventually at the end of it, the whole report in its edited version will become public.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, herein lies the problem. We've received what is a confidential draft report at this point. Now we're being asked to discuss it publicly. If the committee decides that we want to go line by line on this, then it will be out in the public realm. Typically, when we have these types of committee meetings, there is a significant amount of back and forth that goes on, discussion and rationale, and people putting their positions forward, and all of that will be in the public realm. There may be some things with a certain individual, for example, who's named in the report that I don't agree with, and that individual will understand my rationale for not agreeing with them.

Really, I'm not trying to be difficult. I'm trying to have some sense of normalcy here in how we deal with these reports. If it's the will of the committee to move forward with this, I think this is where we need to clarify this, notwithstanding what the initial motion that was approved on April 11 says. Can we, as a committee, decide to take this off of ParlVU, take it off the public realm, given that the report is not even public, and discuss this within this framework of Zoom that we're dealing with?

I'm really curious as to what the answer is on that from the clerk, because there may be, as I said, information, proprietary stuff, dealing with Zoom. For example, any one of us might have a problem with what we heard from Zoom and now we're out there publicly discussing that. Not that I have a problem with Zoom, but there may be something in the report that I don't agree with them on, or something proprietary that I have concerns with. Now we're exposing that company publicly to the concerns that any one of us may have with them, whether with respect to security, privacy and all of that stuff. I think we need to pause on this for a second, given those issues.

• (1120)

Mr. Blake Richards: As a point of order, Madam Chair...or maybe this is a point of order and I'd like to add to it. I'm not certain.

The Chair: Go ahead and I can address both comments or questions.

Mr. Blake Richards: I certainly agree with everything Mr. Brassard had to say. I would take it a step further and would suggest that when we receive a draft copy of a report that is confidential in nature, we're bound to keep that confidential. We're not supposed to share it with anyone. I think what we are being asked to do here, as members of Parliament, is to break that expected confidentiality by speaking publicly on this format. The more I think about this, the more I'm actually quite uncomfortable with that. I think we—

The Chair: This is not the first time this has—

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Chair, if I can finish, I think we need to be seeking advice on this so that, as members of Parliament, we're not putting ourselves in a position where we have done something inappropriate.

I'm not sure if our clerk can respond to that or if we need to seek outside advice on that, but to be frank, the more I think about this, the more I'm actually uncomfortable even participating in this meeting until we have some clarity on that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): I would like to add to this point of order too, Madam Chair, at some point.

The Chair: Okay. I'll just respond quickly and then I'll give the floor to you, Mr. Gerretsen.

I have discussed this with the clerk. I will also take a brief pause to get even more clarification from the clerk, but this is not the first time a draft report has been discussed in public. We are by no means the first to do this, and I'm not talking just within the COVID-19 context. I will get more examples from the clerk as to why and when that was done in the past, if he is able to provide that, but this is—

Yes, Mr. Richards.

Mr. Blake Richards: I don't disagree. In fact, I'm fairly certain I probably have participated in committees where that has been done. My assumption is, though, that we have a copy of a report that is marked confidential, and I know when we've been given a report of that nature I've always taken that incredibly seriously. That is how the system already worked, and for us to discuss it in public, again, I'm not sure I'm comfortable with that.

I guess I'll wait for the advice that we get, but I feel like I may be being put in a position where I'm being asked to do something that I'm not comfortable enough to do and, therefore, I may not be able to participate in the meeting. Therefore, I would almost feel like my privileges might be breached, because I'm now being told I can't participate in the meeting that others are going to participate in because their choice—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Mr. Blake Richards: Sorry, we are in the middle of a point of order right now and I am—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: No, it's back and forth between you and the chair right now.

Mr. Blake Richards: It's part of a point of order, though, so could you let me finish?

I await the advice, but I want to point out that I think we need to take this quite seriously. We have a copy of a report that's marked confidential, and putting MPs in a position where we're not certain whether or not we're doing something inappropriate is dangerous. I just want to point that out.

I get your point that this has happened before, but we're talking about a report here that is marked confidential.

The Chair: The second thing I'd like to point out is that, as I've stated before, there is an order from the House that all our meetings be publicly broadcast, so that's the other thing to note.

If you give me a moment I will try to address some of your concerns as well as I can at this point. I think those are the two main things: This is what the committee has been ordered to study, and it has been specifically stated that these meeting must be publicly broadcast, and that includes the draft report. This brings us to today, when we are going through the draft report so that we are able to adopt it.

I understand your concern and I'll try to get some more advice on that as well.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Chair, I would like to ask a question before you request the clerks' opinion.

Despite the request by the House...

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): I have a point of order.

The Chair: Hold on just a second. I have a speaking list now on this point of order, so maybe everybody—

• (1125)

Mr. Eric Duncan: It's an audio issue.

The Chair: Yes, there is an audio issue as well.

I have a speaking order at this point.

Mr. Gerretsen, you did raise your hand as well.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I believe I raised my hand first.

[*English*]

The Chair: You're at the bottom of the “raise hand” list, so I don't know if Ms. Normandin perhaps raised her hand first and I should go according to that list, or...

We have a list and it's Madame Normandin, then Ms. Blaney, then Mr. Richards again and then Mr. Gerretsen.

Please give me just a moment and then I will proceed with that list.

• (1125)

(Pause)

• (1125)

The Chair: The clerk has just established once again some of the points that I have already mentioned. We're not the first to be doing this in public.

This part is not what the clerk has said but what I am about to suggest. It increases transparency, yes, and there are no rules against our doing this in public. That's why it has been done in public before. It is an adopted norm, I guess, but in this case we really have no choice because we have been ordered by the order of reference adopted by the House. It requires all committees meeting virtually to be webcast to the public on ParlVU, so it's quite clear that we must be in public.

As for the report, yes, I agree that it's a confidential draft report, so it's not to be circulated so that someone can print it and then further circulate it. Discussing the report will of course reveal certain aspects of the report, but it's still not the same as publishing the report before it's edited and is in its final version.

That's all I can say for now. We'll carry on with the list that we have. If you'd like to get on that list, then please just raise your hand in the "participants" toolbar, and I can hear from you.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Is the list related to the point of order?

The Chair: Yes, the list is related to the point of order.

Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

Some points have already been raised by my colleagues, but I would like a clarification. Did I understand correctly that, even if the committee decided to go in camera, it would not be possible because of the order of reference it received from the House?

• (1130)

[*English*]

The Chair: That is correct.

Next we have Ms. Blaney, please.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): I think this is an important conversation, and I'm a little concerned as well. I just wanted to share that.

At the beginning of our committee, we did have a phone meeting where we discussed witnesses, and I'm just wondering if that was in camera.

The Chair: No, it was not.

I'll confirm that meeting was also webcast, but only audio was heard. I'll check with the clerk.

Ms. Blaney, I just got confirmation again that what I said is, thankfully, correct. It was a public meeting, and the audio was recorded in that one.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you.

The Chair: Next up we have Mr. Richards.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you.

I won't belabour this, but there are two things that remain a concern or that I certainly have doubt about in my mind.

I understand what you indicated and the advice you've received, Madam Chair. However, I note that we have a copy of a report—I

assume we all have it in front of us—and it clearly says "confidential" on it.

As a member of Parliament, it has always been drilled into me—and has been something I've taken very seriously—that when I have a report that is confidential, I am not to share it with anyone or reveal any of the contents of it. I can say with all certainty that I have never revealed a thing from a confidential report to anyone. Even in cases like this where we've had draft reports marked confidential, we've had discussions as a committee on whether we could talk to our caucuses about them, because they've had potentially significant impacts on caucus meetings. We've had to make those kinds of decisions. I guess that then takes some of the confidentiality away, but we make that decision. Maybe that's something we can do as a committee. I don't know.

I feel we haven't squared that circle yet. The report says "confidential". I get that we've been asked by the House to do something, but there are contradictions here. I think we need to completely address those so we can all feel comfortable that by participating in these conversations we're not doing something inappropriate. That's the first point.

To be fair, you mentioned that we'll be disclosing certain aspects of it. I would argue there is the potential that we will basically disclose the entire report, depending upon how we go about it and how much discussion there is on certain parts. It isn't insignificant. We have to figure out how we reconcile these things.

The second thing was raised briefly by Mr. Brassard. He didn't raise it as a breach of privilege, but I would say it goes that far. He asked what would happen if he were to mention something proprietary about Zoom. I think that was his example. There are other potential examples.

We're all covered by parliamentary privilege in committee meetings—that's my understanding—but it was not made clear to us during the hearings when questions were asked of certain individuals.... I don't know that we had a clear answer so as to be completely confident that we are in fact covered in this video conference platform. I think that would leave some concerns in people's minds, especially when we are talking about potentially revealing the contents of a confidential report publicly.

If someone were to have concerns about Zoom, for example, or maybe indicate there was dishonest testimony by a witness, whatever the case might be—I'm not saying that any of those things have happened or will happen—what if they felt they were covered by privilege and they were not?

I'm still a little concerned about the situation. I'd like to see how we could square those circles. I'm not wanting to prevent this from occurring, but I also don't want to put anyone in a bad spot or get anyone into hot water here, including me, obviously.

I'm not confident that we're in that position. I look forward to hearing some of the thoughts of others, but I'm not sure I'm comfortable here.

• (1135)

The Chair: Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The House of Commons tasked us with the responsibility of doing something and the motion was unanimously supported, including by the Conservative Party, to have meetings, set out in a certain manner—in this case to be public—and to address the report in a public fashion and report back.

This notion of parliamentary privilege being breached is a gigantic red herring. To suggest that your parliamentary privilege is breached because you choose not to be part of the meeting, because you're concerned over it, is not.... That's the same thing as saying that Internet access throughout Canada is a parliamentary privilege issue. It is not.

Parliamentary privilege is when somebody intentionally tries to impugn your ability to do your job. If you choose not to do your job, the job that the House of Commons has appointed us as a committee to do, then that's a choice that you make and it's certainly not impugning anybody's parliamentary privilege. We've been tasked with the responsibility of doing something in a certain manner, which we've set out to do, and it has been done exactly as indicated to this point.

My suggestion would be that we get on with this and that we deal with the actual report, because that's what we've been asked to do. Every party that's represented in this meeting has been asked to do that by the MPs in their party who unanimously voted in favour of this. I would encourage us to get on with the actual work that we have to do.

The Chair: Sorry. We're having technical difficulties and we just need a brief suspension due to that.

• (1135) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1135)

The Chair: We're back. We'll resume now.

I'd also like to remind all of the members, as we begin again, to wear their headsets when they intend to speak, or perhaps they have some kind of mike or headphone device that will result in better voice quality for the interpreters.

Mr. Richards, if you have your headset, could you please wear it?

Mr. Blake Richards: Unfortunately I've forgotten it today, so I don't have it.

The Chair: Do you have anything that might help improve the quality of your sound?

Anyway, we're going to have the clerk address some of these things, but before he does, I did want to put in my two cents about the privilege issue. It's not really my two cents, but what we've heard before this committee from our legal experts and law clerk is that privilege extends to committees no matter where they are. If a committee is travelling, privilege would extend to that travelling committee as well, so it's not because of the member's location. Thus, I believe this is a formal proceeding of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and therefore, privilege would apply to these proceedings regardless of the location or how it's being broadcast.

That has been my understanding from what we've heard from all of the witnesses.

We'll hear from our wonderful committee clerk, Justin.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Justin Vaive): Thank you, Madam Chair.

To add to what the chair has indicated, the meeting today is proceeding in public because of the House motion from April 11, which indicated that all virtual committee meetings are to be webcast on ParlVU to the public. That effectively constrains not only our committee but all committees, requiring them to hold their meetings in public and preventing the committee from considering matters in camera. That's the reason that today's meeting is public.

With respect to the issue of the markings on the draft report indicating “confidential”, that is a practice when draft reports are sent out. We mark them as confidential as a way to prevent a wider distribution of the draft report to people who aren't part of the committee or staff members working for them.

However, I should reiterate that the draft report is entirely your document. It is entirely up to the committee to decide how the document should be viewed, whether it should be viewed as something that is confidential or whether you want to share it more broadly. It is your working document and, at least initially, it's sent out to you, shared with you, under the usual practice, which is to indicate that it's a working document that is confidential.

What you choose to do with that, how you choose what kind of status you would want to give it, whether it be confidential or not, is entirely up to the committee to decide. Therefore, ultimately, it would be a decision for the committee to make with respect to this report.

• (1140)

The Chair: We have heard from the law clerk. I have one more announcement to make. I don't know how the members will feel, but since the request was made to me I think it's only fair to share it with everybody else.

Ms. May has been a participant in a lot of our proceedings, and we've allowed her to sit in. She has sent a request to me and the clerk to see if she can sit in during this proceeding. We have not sent her the invitation to sit in as yet, because I wanted to clear it with the members here today. Are there any objections or comments on that?

Mr. Blake Richards: Let's have this resolved first before we make that decision. Obviously determining whether this is confidential or not would be the first step in determining something like that. Let's do that and then we could make that determination. It would then be what the parameters are around her participation. Is it to listen in? Obviously one would need to be a member of the committee to provide recommendations, for example. Obviously her participation would be limited in that regard, but where would the limitations begin and end? I think we need to address the current conversation before we can get to that one.

The Chair: I thought to some degree we had.

If you could just put your hand up in the participants list.... If it's a new point of order, you can interject by saying point of order, but if it's to jump in on the conversation and the current point of order that has been raised, then just raise your hand in the participants list.

Mr. Blake Richards: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Richards, you have a new point of order?

Mr. Blake Richards: Yes. You just said people were to raise their hands. Maybe the screen I'm seeing is different from the one you're seeing. I see seven people with their hands raised.

The Chair: Yes. After you it's Ms. Blaney; you again, Mr. Richards; Mr. Gerretsen; and then Mr. Alghabra. Is that what you're seeing as well? That's what I'm seeing, and then Mr. Brassard and Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Blake Richards: I don't see the order. All I see are people who have their hands raised. It shows me Ms. Blaney, Mr. Gerretsen and Mr. Alghabra.

The Chair: Do you not see them in list order?

Mr. Blake Richards: No, it just shows the people who have their hands raised. That's all I see. I don't know what order they're in.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: What does it matter? You don't see them when we're sitting in an in-person meeting. It's up to the chair to organize.

Mr. Blake Richards: I don't know if that was appropriate.

The Chair: Order, please.

Mr. Blake Richards: I'm not suggesting it does matter, but it seemed to me you were indicating that hands weren't raised.

The Chair: Mr. Richards, I think you will see it the same way I'm seeing it. I'll guide you through.

• (1145)

Mr. Blake Richards: I'm not concerned about being able to see the order. Maybe I just misunderstood what I thought you were saying.

The Chair: I mentioned this in the introductory remarks and at every meeting as well.

Generally when we're physically in a committee room, a point of order is raised sometimes even between other points of order. To establish that somebody is raising a new point of order I would request that you unmute your mike and raise the point of order. After that, whoever wants to speak to that point of order clicks the "raise hand" icon in the participants tab or toolbar, and then I'll know they wish to speak to that point of order. That's the way to keep it as orderly as possible as we do this virtually.

If you click on the participants icon on the bottom toolbar, then a list should pop up on the right side of your screen, and the order that the names occur on that list is the order of when they raised their hands. The order will switch continuously. You will see that the names will all of a sudden get switched when somebody else raises their hand, or takes their hand down. It's even more accurate than visually being in the room. Sometimes if I'm looking in one direction I'm unable to see in the other direction, and if people raises

their hands at the same time, this gives me the real-time entry when they raised their hands. It's in the system.

Mr. Richards, is your issue addressed at this point? You seem to be next on the list now.

Mr. Blake Richards: I'm not sure. I don't recall raising my hand since I last spoke; that's a little curious to me. Maybe I did and forgot. I don't know.

Obviously my issue still hasn't been addressed. The concern still exists, but I didn't have anything new to—

The Chair: Could you unraise your hand then at this point?

Mr. Blake Richards: Sure.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

There is no French interpretation for Mr. Richards, as he is not wearing a headset. It has been like that from the start and I just wanted to mention it.

Personally, I am able to follow the discussion despite everything, but as soon as Mr. Richards speaks, there is no interpretation in French. I just wanted to point that out.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for raising that. I know the interpreters were having a problem with the sound, so let me find out.

Just so we can get the translation back up and running, Mr. Richards, do you have earbuds you can put in? Do you have earbuds perhaps instead of a headset that may assist?

Mr. Blake Richards: Sure, but that doesn't provide a microphone.

The Chair: Do you have earbuds that have a microphone? A lot of them tend to have a microphone these days.

Mr. Blake Richards: I don't think so. I can check with my team up front to see if there's anything handy, but I don't have anything handy here.

The Chair: Please check with them. That may assist. If not, if you end up not being able to find anything, then speak closer to the microphone on your computer. That may help as well.

Mr. Blake Richards: What I'll do, if you give me a moment, is check on that. Then what I'll do, if that's not the case, is find out where exactly the microphone is on the computer and try to be close to it if I can.

If you want to give me a moment, I'll do that.

The Chair: Yes, sure.

Next up, we have Mr. Alghabra.

• (1150)

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's ironic that the Conservatives are asking for less transparency, but let me make this point. The House of Commons has given us an order. I think we can say that the objections of our colleagues have been noted. Their comments have been noted, but we know what the terms are and, therefore, we should just proceed. We have to complete this report by a certain time, and I think we should proceed. We've noted the objections and concerns, but we are limited in what we can do.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Alghabra.

Next is Mr. Brassard.

Mr. John Brassard: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Quite frankly, I'd like to be spared the sanctimony, because I think we're dealing with a very serious issue here, and that is the unintended consequences of that April 11 motion. Perhaps at the time that it was negotiated it wasn't thought of, the fact that we were going to be dealing with reports like this that are marked confidential and are meant to be dealt with practically and consistently, as is House practice, in a confidential manner.

The privilege issue notwithstanding, although I think there is a valid concern for that, the concern I have is that we have had individuals and organizations who have come before us and provided testimony. If any of us, including me, Mr. Gerretsen and Mr. Alghabra, call into question, for whatever reason, the testimony of any one of those individuals—say, like Mr. Robert, the Speaker of the House, Mr. Dufresne or Mr. Patrice—if somehow the discussion comes back to the fact that maybe we don't agree with their testimony, my fear, in not dealing with this in camera and being able to freely as a member of Parliament share my views and my thoughts, as other members can share their views and their thoughts, is that it could potentially affect the working relationship that any one of us will have with the House officers.

When we go over to organizations like Zoom and Microsoft, even the Westminster Parliament and some of the testimony that we received from the Scottish Parliament, what we're effectively doing and what we're saying to ourselves by not being able to discuss this confidentially is that we're going to have to be mindful of what we say so as to not impact the potential of those working relationships that we have with people, not just in our Parliament but perhaps those companies that provide services to the government or those individuals who provided testimony from either the Scottish Parliament or the Westminster Parliament.

I think this speaks to a much broader issue of that unintended consequence of what that April 11 motion dictates and the direction that it set out to the committee to deal with all meetings publicly. I don't think it was intended to deal with what is a confidentially marked report that hasn't been put out there in public. There are individuals and organizations we are going to be speaking about, and we can't be critical of anything they said for fear of the impact and effect that would potentially have on the relationships, or of creating a level of disrespect for the companies or whatever the case is.

That really is my broader concern on this. I think we should be able, Madam Chair, to have a free and open discussion, because we are dealing with a very significant issue here, as directed by the

House, about virtual sittings. Maybe one of us has something that we know about, a business platform that we don't agree with. How am I going to share that here without the risk of, first and foremost, affecting that relationship, and second, of saying something that may potentially put me or others in a position of liability?

The unintended consequence of that April 11 motion, Madam Chair, is that I don't think it took into account the situation that we find ourselves in right now.

Listen, I want to get on with this report because I think it's an important report, but I think we also have to be mindful of the impact of anything we speak about here. Otherwise, let's just say, "Okay, we'll accept it as is and not discuss it". Not being able to discuss it openly is not the job of this committee, and I don't think that we, as individual members, should be putting ourselves in a position where we can't openly and freely discuss the contents of this report without fear of affecting those personal relationships that we've developed with people we work with or those organizations that we respect, including other parliaments as well.

That's all I have to say. I think we need an answer to this, Madam Chair, frankly.

• (1155)

The Chair: Okay. You raise some good points.

Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Blake Richards: Point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Is it on a new issue?

Mr. Blake Richards: Yes, I mean, really all I wanted to do is.... I have a set of earbuds here with a microphone. I want to see if they could check to see if the sound quality is better for them now.

The Chair: Absolutely. Maybe put those earphones in and—

Mr. Blake Richards: They are in, and I am speaking on them now, so I am trying to determine whether that has solved the problem for you.

The Chair: Can you bring the mike a bit closer to your mouth, Mr. Richards?

Mr. Blake Richards: I believe that's what I have. Is that better now?

The Chair: I think so. Let me just confirm, though.

Yes, apparently it is good, Mr. Richards. When you speak, when it is your turn to speak, just try to hold on to the wire there.

Next we have Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Thanks, Madam Chair.

I have just a few comments here. I have absolutely no reservations about moving forward in public here with the discussions over this report. I understand it's important work, and I think it needs to move ahead.

I know Mr. Richards said he didn't have a chance to go through it in depth, but many of us got up at seven in the morning to read through this report extensively and get prepared for this meeting. I really feel like we're being held back significantly by this.

I know that I'm a new MP, but I've read up on committee proceedings. On the Our Commons website, the third edition on committee proceedings stipulates that committees do occasionally move forward on deliberating over draft reports. Although they usually proceed in camera, they are able to proceed in public.

Even from a rules perspective, there are other examples of committees proceeding in this manner. I wonder why this is such an issue now, when it's clear that we've been given the direction to do this. It really seems to me that this is an attempt to hold us up, and I think we need to get down to business, to echo my colleague Mr. Gerretsen's point.

The other thing I wanted to say publicly is that I believe Ms. May has made a request to join this meeting. I have absolutely no issue with that either. I think she is a really provocative thinker. She thinks in depth about this. She's been to several of our other committee meetings, and I want to express my support for her participation in the deliberations over this report.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Petitpas Taylor.

Sorry, you've been waiting for so long that you forgot, I think, that you were on the list. My apologies. It's the first time we've had so many hands raised, and I think I did fudge things up a bit. I just want to remind Mr. Turnbull and Mr. Brassard to lower their hands so in the future there's no confusion. Thank you.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): There's no need to apologize, Madam Chair.

My simple comment was with respect to Ms. May as well. I absolutely feel that she has an awful lot to contribute to this study. She has taken part in many of our meetings, and I really welcome her participation.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I was going to throw it out there, since it's come up, that there's some concern over this. Why didn't my colleagues raise this earlier, when they saw the order that had been given to us by the House and, in particular, raise it with their folks who were in the House and voted in favour of it, to understand what their rationale was in supporting this motion that was sent over to us?

It's been well over a month; there was tons of time to look into this. To be surprised by the fact that we're dealing with this now makes it seem like a lot of people are caught off guard by this. The reality of the situation is that, if you had read the motion that we were given in terms of what to do in this study, you would know that this was right in there. The fact that people seem to be shocked by it now is a sign that they didn't do their proper homework before, and as a result everybody else is getting held up right now.

We've been at this for an hour, and we have not even started to talk about the report yet. I think we need to do what we've been asked to do and get on with it.

• (1200)

The Chair: Next up we have Mr. Richards, Ms. Blaney, and then Dr. Duncan.

Mr. Blake Richards: There are obviously two issues here, and we've been mostly addressing one. I raised the first issue, and Mr. Brassard raised the other a couple of times, so I want to touch on them both.

I think I see a solution to one of them, for sure. On the idea of the confidential report being discussed in a public format, it seems to me that the solution is to move a motion. Once this point of order has been addressed, I would be happy to move a motion, if there's support for it. We could simply move a motion that the report is not considered confidential and that the committee is free to discuss it in public. If we were to pass a motion as a committee, I would certainly feel comfortable, as I hope others would, too, that confidentiality is not being breached.

I'm happy to move that motion, if it helps. That would address the first issue.

I don't really feel like we've addressed the second issue. That's the issue that Mr. Brassard was speaking to a few moments ago. He said we could be discussing things that have been said by witnesses and the issues that surround that. I haven't heard anyone on the government side address that.

I've heard a lot of comments from the government members that we should move on with things. I want to make it really clear that I think so, too. I think this is an important report that we need to deal with, and there are a lot of issues we need to address in doing that. However, we also have to make sure that we're doing it in an appropriate fashion. I don't think saying we should get on with things, without addressing something that actually is an issue, is a wise way to proceed.

I think we have a solution for one issue, if there's agreement that what I'm proposing makes sense. I don't think we have a solution for the second. I'm not hearing anything that addresses it. I guess I don't necessarily have a solution myself. That concern still remains in my mind.

The Chair: Sorry, what is the second concern?

Mr. Blake Richards: It was laid out very well by Mr. Brassard just a few moments ago—

The Chair: Oh, okay. I just wanted to clarify—

Mr. Blake Richards: Rather than repeating it, I just thought, in the interest of time—

The Chair: No, I get it. Thank you.

Ms. Blaney.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: First of all, I want to put it on the record that I'm absolutely fine with having Ms. May join our group today. I appreciate what she sent out, and I welcome adding her voice to this very important discussion.

Also, Mr. Richards, I'd be very happy to support your motion.

The Chair: Okay.

Next we have Dr. Duncan.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Good morning, folks.

I appreciate what has been shared this morning. I, too, would like to add my voice.

First of all, I've read through the report, and I'd like to thank all the witnesses who appeared and, of course, all those who prepared the report. I read it through carefully this morning. I hope we can go through it.

I think it's really important to point out that we have been given a mandate from the House. I would like to quote from the motion:

...during the period the House stands adjourned pursuant to this order, the Standing Committee on Health, the Standing Committee on Finance, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, and the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology may hold meetings for the sole purpose of receiving evidence....

It continues:

...members shall attend and witnesses shall participate via either videoconference or teleconference....

The motion goes on:

...the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be instructed to study ways in which members can fulfill their parliamentary duties while the House stands adjourned on account of public health concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the temporary modification of certain procedures, sittings in alternate locations and technological solutions including a virtual Parliament....

I won't keep reading. The point is that we have been given a mandate. Witnesses have appeared. We've been given a report that I think we must review and discuss today.

Also, to add my voice to others, I think it would be important to hear from Ms. May this morning.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you to everyone who participated in this discussion.

I have to say, I think a lot of points have caused me to think more deeply about this issue. They were all very good points. Mr. Brassard, you were definitely able to elaborate a bit more and give me a better understanding of your apprehension about carrying on with this in public.

The only thing I can say as to your discomfort about the different platforms we're going to discuss using and the different parliaments we've spoken with is that I'm not sure what your recommendations are and how far you want to go into the nitty-gritty of things when it comes to this report, but as it's laid out right now by our analysts, and upon reading the report, it is higher-level principles, and it very much focuses on our Parliament and our country being unique.

It's not that this is an ideal situation. I am by no means saying that this is ideal, but I'm wondering if there is a way we can go through this report and perhaps then take a look at whether our rec-

ommendations would even get anywhere near saying whether a certain parliament is doing something that's not right. I think we're really trying to pick something that is right for us, and we're not really even getting into picking platforms. Perhaps we will be putting that ball in the court of the administration and the technical teams, so they can make those decisions. We're focusing more on guiding principles.

That's the way I see the analysts having laid out the report. A lot of these decisions are just guidelines for us to give back to the House in how they can move forward.

Having said that, and having heard from everybody about—

I see some raised hands on this issue. Maybe it's in response to something I've said. Maybe I've said too much.

Mr. Richards, you're up first, then Mr. Turnbull, and then Mr. Brassard.

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Chair, it's actually not in response to anything you said. I appreciate that you're trying to provide some clarity.

What I didn't get was some clarity about the suggestion I made. I heard Ms. Blaney say that she thought it was a good idea. I didn't hear from anyone on the government side who spoke afterwards that there was agreement on the idea of waiving the confidentiality of the report or taking the confidential label off the report so that we can feel comfortable we're not divulging something confidential in a public setting.

I certainly won't feel comfortable moving forward until I hear that assurance. Then, of course, we still have to address the second—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: There's a new point of order.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: There are numerous people indicating that Mr. Richards cannot be translated. I think it's getting to be quite disturbing for those individuals.

The Chair: Maybe we can pause here for a second again.

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Chair, I forgot to hold the microphone close. Is that better?

The Chair: That is much better. I'll try to be more mindful, and you can be as well, to hold your mike up closer so that the interpreters can hear.

Of course, it's really important, because we need to ensure that Ms. Normandin can participate fully in this meeting. We certainly do understand that it is a member's privilege to be heard in either English or French in this committee meeting. We'll do whatever we can, and if we have to pause, I think everyone's okay with doing that.

I take your point about the motion you're willing to raise. Let's just hear from a few more commenters, and we might be able to get to that motion.

• (1210)

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Chair, my apologies. I did forget to raise the mike, and I will try to remember to do so. I'm happy to be prompted if I forget. It is obviously a little unnatural to hold something up like this, so it's not something you necessarily remember to do. I will try to remember.

I will repeat what I said. If people didn't hear it, I want to make sure they have that opportunity.

What I indicated was that it wasn't in response to anything you had said, Madam Chair, that I raised my hand. It was more in response to something I wasn't hearing. I raised the issue that I thought we had a way around one of the concerns: I, or whoever else would like to do so, could move a motion to take the confidential label off the report so that we are not discussing something confidential in a public setting. That would address my concern at least.

I don't know if others feel the same way about that. I heard from Ms. Blaney that she felt comfortable with that. I didn't hear any indication from our Bloc representative or from any of the government representatives as to whether they were comfortable with that. I think it would be important to know that before we move out of the point of order so that we know if we're in a position to have that addressed.

I will also point out, though, that it still doesn't address the second set of concerns, which are also very valid concerns, so we do need to figure out a way to address those as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Richards.

I believe there are two more hands raised for the same point of order. After that, if it's okay with the committee, perhaps we can entertain the motion.

Mr. Richards, I'll remind you that there are limited circumstances in which this committee can take motions. The order of reference stipulates that only motions needed to determine witnesses and motions related to the adoption of the report are in order. There is a grey area here, but I think we can say this motion relates to the adoption of the report, and I could hold it in order if you wish to present it. Before you do, though, I'd like to hear all the members on the original point of order.

We have Mr. Turnbull, and then Mr. Brassard.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the suggestion Mr. Richards made, but I would say, respectfully, that I think the motion he is suggesting would be out of order, given what you've just stipulated.

I wonder if removing confidentiality from the report requires a motion at all, since I think the motion that Mr. Richards is proposing would be out of order technically. As you said, only motions that pertain to witnesses and their scheduling seem to be in order, if I'm not mistaken.

The Chair: It's motions related to the adoption of the report as well.

Let's hear from Mr. Brassard, and then maybe we can hear from the clerk on that.

Mr. John Brassard: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Quickly, as for what we need to do, perhaps each committee member should go back to the leadership teams and talk to them about the unintended consequences that are going on with respect to not only the drafting of the report, but also our discussion. If we are going to proceed with this, then....

In committee, I am used to having very frank discussions. Sometimes we don't agree and sometimes we do, but it's going to be difficult. I understand that this is a high-level report, but there may be some things that any one of us can call into question.

I think we need to go back to our leadership teams and express the view that there are some unintended consequences to the motion, particularly as they relate to the situation we find ourselves in. If we are going to be in this situation for some period of time, an amendment could be made to the original motion. I don't know the mechanism to make that happen, but I think we need to be aware of that.

I think we need to deal with these types of things confidentially so that we can express our opinions, views, concerns and perhaps counter-arguments about what individual witnesses say without the potential of either affecting our relationship with those individuals or impugning the companies that came before us.

I think we all need to consider this, as members of this committee. If this is the first time we've seen this situation evolve, I think it's incumbent upon us and we have a responsibility to let our leadership teams know about it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1215)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: This isn't the first time we've seen this, Madam Chair. A number of people have cited that this has happened, and the precedent has definitely been established at this point.

As a point of order, I want to point out that what we have been engaging in for the last hour is a debate on an issue, not a point of order.

You, as the chair, should receive the original point of order, listen to any other input on it and then make a decision. That's how a point of order works. This issue has turned into a free-for-all debate over an assumption that we need to come to some kind of joint resolution, when we don't. With a point of order, the decision is made by the chair, and then if a majority of members are not happy with that decision, there are other options we can take.

In terms of going back to our leadership to advise them of some potential unintended consequences, this is out of the hands of our leadership at this point. This motion was adopted by the House of Commons. Once it's been adopted, it is the will of the House. If we want to go back and suddenly tell the House that it made an error, that can be done through the individual channels that allow us to do that. It certainly should not affect the way this committee continues to operate.

This committee must operate under the direction that it has been given, and that's the job we've been tasked to do. We need to get on with this because we've been having a debate on this issue, which was raised by one or two members, for the last hour, and it's certainly gone well beyond what would be considered a point of order.

The Chair: I'm going to hear from one last speaker: Madame Normandin. Then we're going to move to the motion that Mr. Richards is—

Mr. Blake Richards: I have a point of order, Madam Chair. Maybe it's an issue with the technology. I don't know what it is, but I did have some other points I wanted to make. I see that my hand is still raised, so I—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Maybe you could bring the microphone closer to your mouth.

Mr. Blake Richards: Yes, I'm sorry. That's a difficult thing to remember, for some reason.

The Chair: I believe your hand was raised from before. You have to unraise your hand, and then put your hand up.

Mr. Blake Richards: So I have to lower it, and then re-raise it. Okay, no problem.

The Chair: Yes, that way the order will be correct.

Mr. Blake Richards: I just saw my hand was raised and thought I was on the list. But okay, no problem.

The Chair: No, you have to unraise it; otherwise, it gives me an incorrect order, and you would always remain at the top of the list, the whole time. You may like that, but I'm sure the other members will want their turn.

Mr. Blake Richards: No, I don't think that would be fair. I just didn't realize. I thought that someone would lower the hand when we were given the floor. But okay, no problem.

The Chair: No problem.

The last person we're taking on this point of order is Madame Normandin. After that, we'll get on to the next step that I'll mention.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I would like to speak because I have not yet done so and there was a concern that almost only members from the governing party have spoken to the point of order.

The only thing I would find unfortunate, if our meetings were public, is that, if we finally arrive at a consensus report, we would remember all the debates we had internally. It is manageable, I suppose.

I understand that those with dissenting opinions are going to make them known anyway in a minority report, which will be public. We must remember that. If you are prepared to put things in a public report, I do not see why there would be any discomfort in having us discuss it in committee publicly.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for that comment. It's well noted, as well.

I think everyone has had an opportunity to discuss this issue at length, so I'm not going to entertain any more comments on this issue.

Mr. Blake Richards: On a point of order, Madam Chair, my hand was raised.

The Chair: Do you want to make a new point of order, Mr. Richards? Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Blake Richards: No. My hand was raised to speak to this.

The Chair: I'm not taking any more comments on this. I think we all—

• (1220)

Mr. Blake Richards: But I had my hand raised prior to your indicating that, Madam Chair, so I believe it would be in order for me to still have that opportunity.

The Chair: Your hand was raised from the previous hand raised, but—

Mr. Blake Richards: No, I did as you asked me to. I lowered my hand and then raised it. That was prior to your—

The Chair: Yes, but prior to taking Madame Normandin, I had already said that this would be the last speaker.

Mr. Blake Richards: My hand was raised prior to that, Madam Chair.

The Chair: All right. I'll allow a quick comment.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you. I appreciate that.

I still haven't heard any indication of how certain members, particularly the government members, feel about taking the “confidential” label off the report.

I'm certainly not comfortable proceeding to discuss in a public format something that is marked “confidential”. There are ways, besides leaving the meeting, that I can ensure this doesn't happen.

Despite the fact that people think this is not important, it is important. I think this is important enough that we can address it in other ways, if we can't come to an easy resolution. I can't imagine why anyone would have an issue with this.

I still think we're left with the problems around the second issue. Obviously, we need to address that in our report, for one thing. But, second, it does put members in a very awkward position. I guess some people on the conference call don't believe this is important. I think it is. Maybe you'll address that in what you're about to say.

The Chair: Yes, I am going to—

Mr. Blake Richards: I certainly will not be comfortable until we've addressed those issues. There are ways we can make sure they get addressed before we proceed. I hope we can address them somehow.

The Chair: Yes, and that is what I was going to do. I'm going to move forward from hearing from everybody on discussion of these points of order and allow you to have the floor, Mr. Richards, to move your motion in regard to removing the word “confidential” from this report. I'm going to interpret, for this purpose only, that motions related to the adoption of the report are in order. I'm interpreting that broadly, because I do believe that being able to do this will get us past this point and then allow us to go through the draft report, make our recommendations, and then submit it to Parliament, which is what we have been tasked with.

I believe this motion will be in order.

You have the floor, Mr. Richards.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thanks, Madam Chair.

I'll still point out that we'll have to find some resolution to the second issue, obviously, but I think we can easily address the first issue, so I'll move the motion that the "confidential" label be removed from the report so that we can discuss it in a public forum. That will be the motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Richards.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: On a point of order, Madam Chair, could I simply ask Mr. Richards not to have the mike so close to his mouth? I'm not trying to be difficult, but it's just making a lot of noise in my ears now and it's becoming really quite disturbing. Thank you.

The Chair: I guess there's a happy medium there—

Mr. Blake Richards: I don't know where I'm supposed to have it. It's not to be down. It's not to be up. Where would you like it to be?

The Chair: In between.

Mr. Blake Richards: I'm not trying to be difficult either; I just need to know where is appropriate. I can't hear myself.

The Chair: Even I was hearing a lot of static, and I think Ms. Normandin was having a hard time. I'm sure the interpreters are having an even harder time right now.

Even when we are at the mikes we have physically in Parliament, if you get too close to the mike it does give that static and that really loud sound for the interpreters, and it's a bit difficult to hear, but you need to be close enough. I guess it can't be down on your chest; it should just be around your neck somewhere.

Mr. Blake Richards: Sure. Could I maybe just get a thumbs up? Is it okay now?

The Chair: It's perfect. There's no static.

Mr. Blake Richards: All right. I have a better idea of where it needs to be. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. We can go to a vote on that motion.

Mr. Blake Richards: Can we have a recorded vote on that?

The Chair: Yes, all votes will be recorded.

The vote is on the motion by Mr. Richards.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: Thank you.

Because I felt this was important toward the adoption of the report, I did in this instance interpret it broadly. I want to make that clear: We don't have a lot of leeway on that.

Even to the second point made in the original point of order, which is the concern about having this meeting in public, unfortunately we don't have a lot of latitude there either. Although your points are taken and I consider a lot of your concerns to be legitimate, we have to do what we have been mandated to do as a committee. Therefore, in a public meeting, we will have to go through

adopting this draft report. Hopefully, we can move on from this issue right now.

You can definitely feel free to discuss it with your party leadership. I'm sure that this was discussed. It may not have been an unintended consequence, because it was clear in the motion that we would be presenting a report to the House of Commons on May 15. It was particularly stated in that motion that all meetings will be made public and that the committee will present a report by May 15 to the House of Commons.

If we can begin where we left off before the points of order, which was... No, we have one more issue, I believe, about Ms. May. Some people made comments about wanting her presence, and other comments were made around the rules of her participation in the meeting.

I was looking for a general consensus on that issue. I obviously don't want to belabour that point either. By a nodding of heads, I can see if there's a general consensus. If there's not, then we won't have Ms. May participate.

Yes, Mr. Richards.

• (1225)

Mr. Blake Richards: I guess I would be looking to understand the parameters of that participation before I could be comfortable giving a response.

The Chair: Mr. Richards, I believe Ms. May wants to participate and, whenever recognized, to be able to provide her feedback and make comments. She does not want to just sit in without making any suggestions or comments, because, of course, she could probably do that with ParIVU.

That is my understanding of her request.

• (1230)

Mr. Blake Richards: My feeling is that obviously we're singling out one member of Parliament. You're either a member of the committee or you're not. If you're not a member, you generally don't participate in report writing, and if we open it up to one, why wouldn't we open it up to all 338? I would be uncomfortable with singling out one individual to be included.

The Chair: I completely respect that decision, and we're going to move on from this.

Ms. May, if she is watching, or I will inform her, is free to talk to other committee members and share her ideas. I don't think there is anything wrong with that. Any member of Parliament can do that individually with different committee members, but we will not have her participate in this meeting or the next meeting.

Now we will move on to the report. I know there are a couple of members who don't have the line numbers on the side of the report. It was sent in that format. Unfortunately, another member has indicated to me that they, too, don't have line numbers. For me, it depends on what device I open the report on. My printed version does not, but the version on my Surface Pro does. That's the one I'm using in this Zoom meeting, so I'm going to have to go back and forth a little. I might not be able to see some of you.

Do you want to go line by line or paragraph by paragraph?

Mr. Blake Richards: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Richards.

Mr. Blake Richards: I had my hand raised. I have some issues I would like to address, which I think would be helpful in the discussions we're going to have.

There are a few items, the first one being that there are a number of outstanding requests that were made by the committee of witnesses for the production of some documents. I can go through them. I know some stuff was sent around this morning. I was going through what I could of the report and I didn't have a chance to look at that, so some of these may have been addressed in that email this morning, but I'll go through them one by one to see if we have any indication as to whether any of these have been received or are expected to be received.

Obviously, there are things that we felt—or at least one member felt, with no objection from anyone else in all instances—were important for the committee's benefit and information. It would be good to have them when we're writing our report, obviously.

The Chair: We can confirm with the clerk.

Mr. Blake Richards: I can go through them so the clerk has the list. I'll do that first, and then I have two others things, and maybe the clerk can respond to all of it following that.

The first was on April 21—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Could I make a point of order, Madam Chair?

Mr. Blake Richards: I'm in the middle of a point of order right now, I believe.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I guess that's my—

The Chair: Mr. Gerretsen, go ahead.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's my point of order: A point of order means you're bringing up the fact that you believe there has been a procedural error in the conduct and the operation of the meeting. You are making a point of order for the meeting. Mr. Richards, instead, is trying to discuss some of the issues and challenges that he sees with the report and get answers to those questions. Perhaps he's superseding the order the meeting is going to take and we will eventually get to that point.

If there is a point of order that the chair has done something incorrectly in proceeding with the meeting, let's hear what it is. Let's address it and move on. However, this is not, all of a sudden, "Point of order. Now I get to deal with my issues for the next 20 minutes", because that's not what a point of order is.

Mr. John Brassard: It sounds as if Mr. Gerretsen is challenging the chair.

The Chair: Hold on. If I could respond, thank you for both—

Mr. Blake Richards: Could I respond to the point of order before the chair's ruling, Madam Chair?

The Chair: No, I'm not making a... I'm actually going to allow you to speak, so maybe you'd like to hear what I have to say.

Because we haven't heard you out, if you do need clarification—it seems you're seeking some kind of clarification—I'm going to allow you to ask what you need clarification on, and we will see if it

is allowable and a proper point of order, and the clerk may be able to respond to it.

Let's hear you out.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you. I appreciate that. That was the point I was trying to make, Madam Chair. I think members need to let me finish so they can see that it is, in fact, what I indicate it is. It's simply a matter of having these issues dealt with so we can consider the report in an appropriate fashion. I'll go through them.

The first point I was making, obviously, as I already indicated, was in regard to the outstanding request there was for documents to be produced by various witnesses. I'll just go through them so the clerk will have the list of what they were and we can maybe then see whether there are responses to that.

The first one was during the April 21 meeting. Of the Clerk of the House Charles Robert, Ms. Blaney had asked for an assessment of which MPs could have problems or concerns with Internet accessibility and whether that was something the clerk or House administration had a handle on.

On April 29, there were several. Of Mr. Moseley from Zoom, Mr. Gerretsen had asked for the minimum megabytes per second for Zoom to be able to work properly via the Internet. From the Translation Bureau, Ms. Blaney had asked Ms. ?Laliberté for the numbers of increased injury or fatigue incident reports. Of Mr. Moseley, Ms. Blaney had asked for the number of employees they have in Canada. Of Mr. Moseley again, Mr. Duncan had asked for the status of the master services agreement with the House of Commons, and a copy of it. Again, of Mr. Moseley, Ms. Duncan had asked about their ability to authenticate votes. Of Mr. Weigelt from Microsoft, Ms. Duncan, again, had asked for cryptographic measures that would be recommended to protect the integrity of votes.

Then on April 30, there were a few requests of Mr. McCowan from the PCO. I had asked for the government's perspective or policy on the use of Zoom. Of Mr. McGill from the Scottish Parliament, Ms. Duncan had asked for the options being considered there for remote voting. Of Mr. Hamlyn of the U.K. House of Commons, Ms. Duncan had asked for remote voting testing arrangements and a follow-up on their testing results. Of Mr. McCowan of the PCO, Ms. Blaney had asked whether cabinet interpretation is provided by Translation Bureau employees or freelance contractors, and if by contractors whether they are certified.

Lastly, on the May 4 meeting, there were five requests. I requested from Ms. Gagnon from the International Association of Conference Interpreters whether there was a research paper or a study referred to in their brief and in their comments as “conclusive proof that the quality of sound...[teleconferences] provide never come close to the quality of sound needed for” remote simultaneous interpretation. On whether there was a study or a research paper that was referred to in that quote, she indicated there was and that she would provide it. Of Mr. Phillips of the Canadian Association of Professional Employees, both Mr. Turnbull and Ms. Blaney had asked for numbers concerning the interpreters' injuries.

Again of Mr. Phillips, Mr. Blaney had asked about ISO details associated with international standards for interpreters and video conferences and for a follow-up brief on when consecutive interpretation would be more appropriate than simultaneous interpretation. Lastly, of Mr. Patrice, the deputy clerk of administration, Mr. Brassard had asked for the number of employees required for virtual proceedings.

That was the first thing.

Secondly, I had asked if we could have our analyst provide research on provincial governments and their reopening plans, or the status currently of their legislatures as far as their sittings are concerned. He indicated he would provide it, so I know we'll receive it. I'm just wondering what the status of it is.

Thirdly, there were a number of witnesses who were proposed but not heard from, and I just wanted to get an indication as to what happened with those witnesses. I think some of them are quite significant. Particularly, there are four different groups of witnesses. The first one would be security witnesses. We didn't really get a lot of chance to discuss and sufficiently address this even though there seemed to be some concerns raised by me and a number of other members.

• (1235)

I think that in order to produce a proper report, we need to have some of those concerns addressed.

One of the security witnesses that was quite significant was the Communications Security Establishment and officials from there. We didn't hear from any of them. Other witnesses with regard to security that were requested, but not heard from, included Dick Fadden, the former national security adviser to Prime Minister Harper and the former director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, and Chris Vickery, a director for cyber risk research for UpGuard. Then there was the Canadian Institute for Cybersecurity at the University of New Brunswick and representatives from there.

Other groupings of witnesses who could be considered quite important that we didn't hear from include some of the former officials from the House of Commons. Audrey O'Brien was the former clerk, and many of us will remember her. She often provides very good advice. We did not hear from her, nor did we hear from the previous law clerk, Rob Walsh, or from another former clerk, Mr. Marleau, who has written a number of important books that we utilize in our day-to-day lives as parliamentarians. The advice there would have been good.

Then again, with regard to other jurisdictions, there were a number of other witnesses who were suggested. We did hear from a couple, but we didn't hear from any officials from the Australian Senate or the House of Representatives. We didn't hear from the New Zealand House of Representatives or from either the Senate or the House of Representatives in the United States. Obviously, those are often considered three of the close comparisons we make to our system. We also did not hear from Inter-Parliamentary Union officials.

There were also a few other witnesses that I would call “others”. One is Dale Smith, author of *The Unbroken Machine: Canada's Democracy in Action*. Another is Dr. Hannah White, deputy director of the Institute for Government. Then there's Dr. Kathy Brock, a professor at Queen's University.

Those are all people we didn't hear from who might have provided some very significant testimony. I wonder if we could get updates on all three of these items.

• (1240)

The Chair: We will go to Madam Normandin, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I'd like to go further back. If we ever get to consider the report, I recommend that we proceed paragraph by paragraph, since a paragraph represents an idea. The interpreters will be lost if we refer to lines in the Hansard blues, for example.

[*English*]

The Chair: Your point is noted, and I tend to agree with you. I think that's how we will proceed.

We're going to hear from the clerk as to some of these points.

The Clerk: Madam Chair, on Mr. Richards' first point with respect to some of the follow-up information that witnesses had committed to send to the committee, the answer is that some of the material has been sent in to us and has been distributed. We are, however, still waiting for some of the other material from various witnesses. I know that Mr. Moseley did get back to me and provided information, and that information is in the process of being translated.

The Chair: That was from Zoom, correct?

The Clerk: That's right; it's Harry Moseley from Zoom. That information may have been distributed this morning, since we received the translation.

As for some other witnesses from earlier on, like, for example, Madame Laliberté from the Translation Bureau, we are still waiting for information. We don't have any from her, so that is an outstanding item that we have not received. The same goes for information from Mr. Weigelt. I noted that yesterday evening, or it may have been early this morning, follow-up information from the Privy Council Office was sent around. It was received yesterday and then sent out yesterday evening or this morning.

Some of the more recent.... In fact, as this meeting has been going on, I noticed an email come in from Mr. Hamlyn. I am assuming it is some follow-up information that Mr. Hamlyn, from the U.K. Parliament, is providing to us. Before that gets distributed to the committee, it will of course need to be translated.

As for commitments from our most recent meeting on May 4, I have not received any follow-up information yet from Madame Gagnon or Mr. Phillips. My understanding, from what they indicated in the meeting, was that in some instances they would need to consult with the Translation Bureau to put adequate follow-up information together.

The long and short of it, in terms of the information we're expecting back, is we've gotten some of the material back. We don't have all of it back, but as I am receiving it and able to get it translated, I'm distributing it to members of the committee. Mr. Richards is right, though, that there is still some outstanding material left to be provided to me by the witnesses we've seen.

On Mr. Richards' second point, the briefing note, I can confirm that a briefing note is being worked on and should be distributed shortly. It is a comparison of the provincial and territorial measures that have been taken in relation to how the provinces and territories are proceeding with sittings given the coronavirus.

As for witnesses, Mr. Richards indicated that some of them didn't appear. This is mostly due to the limited number of meetings the committee was able to have with witnesses and the need to balance out panels from among the various suggestions that came from members.

There are also other reasons some of the witnesses weren't called. For example, the panels we had on Internet security filled up with witnesses before we got around to calling or inviting other witnesses, and when that occurred, we didn't invite them because we had already filled the panels. Some of the witnesses mentioned—I noted Audrey O'Brien, Robert Marleau and Mr. Walsh—declined the invitation. The U.S. House and Senate were also approached but they declined.

With respect to the issue of the New Zealand Parliament and the Australian House of Representatives, we did not approach them, mostly because of the time zone difference. For them to appear, they would have had to do so early in the morning, at one or two in the morning, their time. For that reason we didn't approach them.

I hope that responds to some of the concerns.

• (1245)

Mr. Blake Richards: Sure.

Madam Chair, could I get some further clarification on a couple of things, briefly?

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Blake Richards: I'm sorry about that. This is just for some further clarification on a couple of those items, briefly.

I appreciate the clarification that you've given, and I appreciate the difficult nature of the short timelines. I want to point out that our clerk, our analysts and all the folks who support us here are doing a great job trying to keep up with everything that's happening. I

want to make sure that I make it clear that nothing here calls that into question in any way. Obviously there are things we do and, in some cases, need for a proper report.

Let me address the first point I made about the undertakings that we are awaiting. It sounds like most of them are addressed other than, obviously, the last meeting, and we're still awaiting some of those.

There were a couple I noted, and maybe I missed it, but I don't think our clerk addressed them. The first one was Mr. Robert, the Clerk of the House of Commons, from the April 21 meeting, and then the one from Mr. McGill of the Scottish Parliament. I didn't hear anything, and I guess we haven't received anything from either of them.

Then on the stuff from May 4, could you just give me an indication if we've done any follow-up with the individuals who haven't sent anything, and maybe when we might expect to receive those and the ones from the May 4 meeting? Obviously, it'll be important information for us in writing the report.

On the witnesses, I appreciate that clarification as well. What about the Communications Security Establishment, CSE? What happened with them specifically? I think there were a number of issues that arose around security that would have made them a really good further witness, so I just want to get some indication on that one in particular.

• (1250)

The Clerk: Madam Chair, with regard to some of the witnesses and the follow-up information they committed to provide to us, generally, if we've received a response, it's sent out, and with the amount of time that it takes to have it translated, sometimes that might be a day or two. I can follow up and check if we've received something from the Clerk of the House. I do know that there was one bit of follow-up information that did come from Michel Patrice, the deputy clerk of administration from the House. It's entirely possible that the House viewed that as essentially the follow-up information it was committed to providing back, but I can follow up and determine if, in fact, that was the case.

On the follow-up information that Mr. McGill from the Scottish parliament committed to providing, I have not seen anything like that as of yet, but I can definitely follow up with them as well to see if that will be forthcoming.

Lastly, you mentioned some of the follow-up information from the May 4 meeting. I have had some discussion with those various witnesses and, as I indicated and they indicated in the meeting three days ago, some of the material that they needed to provide back to the committee would be information they would need from the Translation Bureau, and so they were committed to approaching them to secure the information they needed in order for them to pass on the follow-up information back to the committee. I can also check with them to see where they are with that and just how quickly the committee can expect to get information back.

I have indicated to many of them that the committee is currently looking at the draft report at this meeting and anticipating looking at it in the next meeting too, meaning next Tuesday, and that for this follow-up information to be of any benefit to the members, ideally they would send that information to us during the time the committee is considering the draft report, which would mean today and Tuesday.

With respect to your specific question on CSE, unfortunately, that would fall into the same category I indicated earlier. The limited nature of meetings that we were able to have on Internet safety filled up with various witnesses. Once those panels were filled up, we didn't necessarily go any further down the list in providing invitations, precisely because we had managed to secure enough witnesses from a variety on the party lists that had been provided to give us some full and balanced panels for those meetings.

Thank you.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you very much for all of that information and the diligence you're undertaking to provide all of that to us. I appreciate the clarifications.

The Chair: Thank you.

That was quite impressive. It was a long list, and it was all in order. I can only recall some of it off the top of my head. Thank you, Justin, for the fact that you had all of that readily handy.

Ms. Normandin has proposed that we go through the report section by section on a topical basis. I think that's a good suggestion because the translated version, of course, sometimes falls on different lines.

Yes, Mr. Richards.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you.

I don't have a problem with going through things point by point or paragraph by paragraph, but I will point out that I separated this from the conversation I was having with the clerk, because I don't believe it's something that we could fault our clerk for by any means.

However, I do think that CSE, given some of the things that were raised about security—I know I did and I know others did.... There was advice that seems to have been provided by CSE—at least from what's reported in the media—that doesn't really seem to have been followed by the government. I think it really would have been important to have heard from CSE, and I don't know how we now address that.

One of the things that I will point out is that we are rushing through this. I get that we've been directed to do this by the House, but we may need to consider the idea that any report we're providing now would simply be an interim report just to deal with the immediate situation and that anything that's being done to address recommendations toward a future crisis like this.... My assumption of what we're doing here, and maybe others have a different understanding, is that not only are we looking at the period of time that we're dealing with now, but also that we seem to be straying into an area that may be a bit outside of the ambit of the motion we were given as to what happens in future situations like this one.

If that is a decision the committee makes—and I'm not suggesting that we should necessarily do that—we probably need to have a bit more of a full study here that includes things like that. If the committee makes that decision, we would maybe want to consider this as being an interim report to deal with the immediate situation, and then anything that would be going forward from there would certainly require more study.

That may not be within the motion, and maybe the committee doesn't want to go there and that's a decision we'll all have to make, but I just point out that some of these things are lacking. I get the constraints that we've been given by the House, but if we're doing anything beyond looking at the immediate situation, we'd be doing a disservice if we didn't consider some of those things.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you for your points, Mr. Richards.

At this point I would suggest that we start going through our draft report and, of course, if the committee finds that the members want to title the report a certain way, it's up to the committee. If the members decide they want to study this issue beyond this report's deadline, the committee may decide to do that as well. If the committee members decide to even put that into one of the recommendations or highlight in certain sections that certain information was lacking or missing, the committee can also do that.

If there isn't consensus on some of those things, of course we do have our supplementary and dissenting opinions where we can also stipulate that. In addition, since this meeting is public, some of those issues were also noted and will be recognized in the blues and, of course, on ParlVu where everyone can see that.

We were on a rushed time frame. We did the best we could in being able to invite a variety of people. I have to attest to the fact of what Justin said when we were going through the witnesses and certain panels for certain days. I could see that they had done a really good job at putting together witnesses who came from a variety of different parties, perhaps not on every panel, but in any given meeting, we made sure we had witnesses whom the Conservatives had suggested and witnesses in that topical area whom the Liberals, the Bloc or the New Democrats had suggested, so we had somebody that each party had suggested on each topic. That is the best we could do in this time frame, but, of course, we're free to include in the report those comments and suggestions to study further.

In terms of going through the report, we will start with page 1 and the introduction.

Are there any issues that anyone would like to raise with the introduction?

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Chair, I will ask—and not to try to delay things in any way—that you give us a little time because, in some cases, certainly with some parts, and the introduction being one of those for me.... I'm not asking to read the whole page while we all sit here, but just give us a bit of time before moving ahead so that we can have a quick look at the page, at least in the instances where we haven't had a chance to view it. Obviously, with the rushed nature of things, in some cases that will be the case. I just ask that you move a bit slowly.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. Blake Richards: Not excessively slowly, but move a bit slowly, if you wouldn't mind.

The Chair: We can take some time on each paragraph. I'll slowly ask if there are any issues or any suggestions on any of the paragraphs as we go through it.

I'll give you some time to quickly skim it at least.

Okay? Maybe that was enough time to get through the introduction.

As we go through the other paragraphs, we do have a function at the bottom of the screen, called "Reactions". Maybe everyone can just put a thumbs-up when they've gotten through the paragraph and are okay with it. If they're not okay with it, they can raise their hand in the participants section to provide feedback.

This is for the introduction. Is everyone okay with the introduction, just the introduction?

Perhaps everyone could also put their cameras on at this time. If your camera is on, I'll be able to see your thumbs-up reaction.

Thank you.

• (1300)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, the thumbs-up only stays for a certain period of time and then it disappears.

The Chair: Yes, I know.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I had it up.

The Chair: Oh, maybe I mistook it. Okay, I'll try to do a better job of recognizing when everybody is done. I've seen them go up for almost everybody.

Omar, did you put yours up? Okay. I think I've seen it.

Mr. Brassard, are you okay?

Mr. John Brassard: Where's the thumbs-up?

The Chair: It's on the toolbar at the bottom.

Mr. John Brassard: No, that's clapping.

The Chair: Well, I'll take that.

We can move on to part (i), "Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs' study on parliamentary duties and the COVID-19 pandemic."

I'll give everyone a few minutes to go through it, and then I'll try to make note of everyone who is okay with it; or if there are any issues, raise your hand.

Mr. Blake Richards: Sorry, Madam Chair. Could you please clarify exactly where someone has to give a thumbs-up on now, what portion of the report?

The Chair: You're on part (i), on page 1, and it continues onto page 2. It's the whole of part (i).

Madame Normandin, do you have a comment?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Yes. The last paragraph refers to a study by the Nova Scotia Legislature, but I don't think it is men-

tioned anywhere else in the document. I am just wondering if it is a typo or if it is because something is missing.

[*English*]

The Chair: Andre, is it different in the French version than mine? It doesn't refer to a study in this version. It just refers to our roots of parliamentary representation and good governance, I guess, responsible government, going back to the roots in Nova Scotia. It's just a historical perspective. Is that correct, Andre? Do you have it the same way in those versions?

Mr. Andre Barnes (Committee Researcher): Yes, that's correct. I added it just as a nod to Nova Scotia.

• (1305)

The Chair: Yes. I thought it was nice.

Thank you, Madame Normandin, for bringing that up.

Mr. Brassard.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, now that it's public, the public can certainly see the compelling work that we're doing on these reports. You'll laugh when I say this, but at line 24, "Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs'", should "Affairs'" have an apostrophe there? Or should there be a removal of the apostrophe and just have it as "Affairs"?

The Chair: I'm sorry. I didn't have the lines, but that's the very first paragraph in part i, right?

Mr. John Brassard: Yes, for "Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs'", should it have the apostrophe there or should it just—

The Chair: No.

Mr. John Brassard: Okay.

The Chair: No, it shouldn't. I think that's just a typo. Correct, Andre?

Mr. John Brassard: Right.

The Chair: Okay. He has it. That will be fixed.

Mr. John Brassard: There's the compelling work, Madam Chair, of in camera committee meetings.

The Chair: I'm glad you caught that with your sharp eye.

I think the NDP is good to go on this section.

I may not have seen some of the other hands up. Maybe you could just put a physical thumbs up in the air so I can see. There you go. Turnbull is okay. Gerretsen is okay with it. Madam Normandin is okay. Ms. Duncan, Mr. Tucker and Ms. Petitpas Taylor are okay with it.

Mr. Alghabra? Okay.

All right, Mr. Brassard?

Mr. Richards, I can't see you right now because your camera is turned off. Are we okay to move forward to section A.i.?

I'm going to assume we're okay to move forward to section A.i.

Mr. Brassard.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, I'm sorry. I hate to do this, but I want to go back to the introduction, because on the reference to 1867, I just need clarification on that. The House has only had a planned sitting schedule since November of 1982, is my understanding, so the House has actually only had a sitting schedule—and maybe Andre can clarify this—since 1982, not 1867.

The Chair: Andre can clarify, but perhaps the House has not been cancelled for any emergency reason since 1867. I think that's what Andre is trying to get at.

Andre?

Mr. John Brassard: I see. Okay.

Mr. Andre Barnes: Madam Chair, you're correct, and Mr. Brassard is also correct. I tried to phrase it in a way that captured both and would be able to go back past 1982. Maybe the phrasing isn't perfect.

Mr. John Brassard: Okay.

The Chair: Okay?

Mr. John Brassard: As long as the understanding is correct, I think we're good to go. Thank you, Andre.

The Chair: We're still on page 2, at part ii, “Notable other decisions taken by the House of Commons related to the Committee's study”. That one is a short section.

Thank you, Mr. Duncan. You're okay with that.

The NDP is okay. The Bloc is okay. It seems like the Liberals have gotten through that section.

Mr. Tucker and Mr. Richards? Mr. Tucker is okay with that section, section ii.

Mr. Richards?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair?

The Chair: Mr. Brassard.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, I woke up earlier than seven o'clock this morning to read this, so you'll have to excuse me, but for Wednesdays there's no mention of the fact that there are take-note debates that occur on Wednesdays as well. If we're going to accurately reflect what's going on in the House on those days, I think we also need to reflect that take-note debates are part of that.

Andre? Okay.

The Chair: Thank you for pointing that out. I hadn't realized that, actually.

• (1310)

Mr. John Brassard: It's why I'm so tired this morning, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Well, you are not too tired to raise good points, so that's fine.

All right. I think we are good to go for that section.

Now we are on section A, “The COVID-19 pandemic in Canada”.

Section A.i., “Overview of health data in Canada for COVID-19”, is slightly outdated, but it indicates here that it's outdated. It's testimony that we received from the public health official who came. It's very statistically based.

Is everyone good with this?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Can I make a comment?

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I have just a quick suggestion.

I felt that the section was really well written, but the last line of it could have been rounded out with a conclusion. The section seems to point to the fact that the numbers continue to rise, and that there is still a serious public health threat.

The Chair: Do you want the conclusion of that section to be that the public health threat from COVID-19 continues?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Yes.

The Chair: All right.

Is that okay with everyone?

Andre, will you be able to add that in? Okay.

We'll move on to section A.ii., “Challenges posed by COVID-19 to in-person parliamentary sittings”.

I'm very sorry, Madam Normandin; I know that in translation it might not be completely accurate.

This section is a little bit longer, so I'll give members more time.

Is everyone okay with this section? Can you indicate once you get through it?

Thank you, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Tochor...

Mr. Brassard.

Mr. John Brassard: Sorry, Madam Chair, but this is with respect to the testimony of Dr. Raymond, the Speaker and Mr. Robert. I asked a question on whether they were satisfied as to whether in fact the Public Health Agency protocols and the measures that were being taken with respect to in-person parliamentary sittings had been followed. I recall that Ms. Raymond said in her testimony that to her knowledge they had. The Speaker and Mr. Robert also said that they had been satisfied with the way that was working.

I don't see that reflected in this particular paragraph, and I think it is important that it is reflected, because we had the chief epidemiologist for the Public Health Agency, one senior officer and the Speaker of the House indicate that. It think it's an important part of this particular part of the report. It shows that we have been following the proper protocols. There has to be—

The Chair: Do you think that might fit better in section A.iii., where we get into the protocols that are being taken in the House of Commons?

Mr. John Brassard: I don't, Madam Chair, because section A.ii. talks about the challenges posed by COVID-19 to in-person parliamentary sittings. As much as there have been challenges....

It refers specifically to maintaining a physical distance of two metres and limiting the size of indoor and outdoor gatherings. It refers specifically to those parameters. This section speaks to in-person parliamentary sittings, so I think it's more appropriate in this section.

I think it should be added as part of the report to indicate that the measures that have taken place so far, that have been happening so far, have actually not posed a challenge to the in-person parliamentary sittings.

• (1315)

The Chair: But we only get into the measures in the next paragraph.

Mr. John Brassard: Okay—

The Chair: I don't know; maybe I'm not understanding, but we do talk about the measures. Maybe we should put it in there.

But it's up to the committee. I'm speaking from a completely topical standpoint, that it just seems to fit there.

Mr. John Brassard: Yes. Where it goes, I guess, is to be determined. I just think it's important and relevant information that was given by those three witnesses, and I think it has to be inserted.

If it goes into section A.iii., at least it's an acknowledgement that what we've been doing up to this point has been following the guidelines, based on the testimony. If you think it should go in section A.iii., then I would agree with that. I just think it's important that this information be put in.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Point taken, Mr. Brassard.

Is everyone okay with inserting it into section A.iii? In section A.iii., we go into all the different measures that have been taken.

In terms of the language, do you want a quote from Mr. Robert of what he stated?

Mr. John Brassard: I think we can leave it to Andre to come up with something. The principle of what I'm looking for is that three witnesses acknowledged that the measures in the smaller in-person sittings of Parliament have been to the public health standards and guidelines that have been set out. At least, that was their observation when I asked that very pointed question to all three of them.

Andre? Okay.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brassard.

Andre, would you agree that it fits better in section A.iii.?

Mr. Andre Barnes: It's wherever the committee would like the information to go. I've got the idea and I've got the language.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Chair, I have a comment as well.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: In the first paragraph of this section, lines 21 and 22 in my version on page 3, I find the wording of the sentence a bit awkward toward the end.

The sentence reads, "Further, the virus has a long incubation period of one to 14 days, during which mild to asymptomatic transmission can occur." I'm not sure what mild "transmission" is, but it doesn't seem to be accurate. I think Dr. Duncan might have a better suggestion.

I think it's asymptomatic, presymptomatic and maybe even post-symptomatic transmission, according to the evidence. I've been keeping up with this as best as possible, but the evidence is showing that. That is in fact what I remember Ms. Raymond saying.

The Chair: That's under section A.ii., Mr. Turnbull?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Yes. It's in section A.ii., "Challenges posed by COVID-19 to in-person parliamentary sittings".

The Chair: I'm sorry. I don't have a printout of the line, so it's hard for me to simultaneously view it on my screen.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: No problem. It's in the first paragraph of that section.

The Chair: It reads, "Further, the virus has a long incubation period of one to 14 days, during which mild to asymptomatic transmission can occur."

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Yes. It's not accurate to say mild "transmission". I think mild "symptoms" is what was meant.

The Chair: People who may exhibit mild or no symptoms; I guess that's what....

You're absolutely correct that it just needs to be reworded. I think we all know the intent of what this tried to state.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: My preference, Madam Chair, would be that it say "pre", "post" and "asymptomatic". I think asymptomatic transmission includes pre and post. Before the symptoms arise, and even after you've exhibited the symptoms, you can still transmit, right?

• (1320)

The Chair: Yes, so you want to say that there's an incubation period of one to 14 days in which somebody with mild symptoms or somebody who's asymptomatic can transmit the virus, but also that after having the virus, they can also transmit it? Is that what you're trying to also say? We're going to have to dig out the evidence of what was stated in order to include that part, I think.

Andre, do you want to make a comment on that?

Mr. Andre Barnes: I think I have the gist of what Mr. Turnbull is looking for, and I certainly have his language captured as well.

I'll look into it, and if anyone has language they can think of before the end of the meeting.... I have enough to go on, I think.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thanks, Ryan.

Okay, so it looks like everyone is good for.... We've spent a lot of time on section A.ii. I think we were on section A.iii, though. We're going backward a little.

We were on section 3, the health and safety workplace protocols put in place at the House of Commons in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. In that section I think we're going to include Mr. Brassard's comments as well.

Is everyone okay with that section, section 3?

Mr. Eric Duncan: I have a couple of quick comments on that.

I'm just wondering about two parts that I think are important, which are other the measures that were done. Add that on to that list just to make sure that, as the situation evolves.... I know the chairs have been removed from the opposition lobbies, and that naturally helps physical and social distancing, so I think it would be good to acknowledge that.

I was there yesterday so I was able to see this first-hand, but there are open doors so we wouldn't be touching door handles all the time. One thing I thought worked really well was the one way in and another way out for the crossing part. Just point out those items for Andre. Then just specifically show how it's continuing, how everybody is coming up with these ideas of ways to do it.

The other quick comment could be that House administration is looking at further ways of protecting our interpreters in the booth. That's one aspect that's still outstanding for them, but I think it'll be important to address that it's in progress to make sure we're acknowledging the struggles they have and how we can help them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Duncan. Those are excellent points, and the analyst has noted all of those. You're absolutely right; we should put in all the measures we are taking so people reading our report in the public or private sector can get ideas from the things we are doing at the House of Commons. Thanks for pointing that out.

We are moving on now to section B.i.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Ms. Normandin had her hand up.

The Chair: Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

At the beginning of the paragraph, it says that about one thousand employees are on the Hill. Do we know how many in total there are right now? A little further on, in the first paragraph of section D, it says that a virtual session requires twice as many employees as a regular one. This suggests that something may not be clear.

Do we know how many people are physically on the Hill right now?

[*English*]

The Chair: You're correct. In this section it says that we have about over a thousand when a regular session is on.

Andre, where is the section where we're noting how many people we have now?

Mr. Andre Barnes: Madam Chair, I think that Madam Normandin's point is that later there is another statistic.

The Chair: Oh, yes.

Mr. Andre Barnes: As for her question about how many staff members are on the Hill currently, I stand to be corrected, but I believe it's 55, so I could add that to the report.

The Chair: Would you like that added to the report? Okay, it's a yes. Would the current numbers be added into the report later at that section, or are you going to add them right into this section, Andre? Yes, okay, it will be what we have now and what we used to have.

Now we will go on to—

● (1325)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Chair—

The Chair: —Mr. Duncan and then Ms. Blaney.

Mr. Duncan, do you have your hand up from before? No? Okay.

Go ahead, Ms. Blaney.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you so much.

There is one part on which I would like clarity. Because it does say that during the virtual part there are double the numbers, I want to make it really clear that when we're in the House, for example, on the Wednesdays, in person, how many there are, and on the virtual days how many, and if those people are all in the House or in Parliament, or if they're in different places. There's just a little bit of fuzziness for me there.

The Chair: Okay. Let's pass this section, and then you can clarify what you would like added when we get to the virtual part.

We're on the legal considerations, section B.i, on parliamentary privilege. I'll give everybody a couple of minutes to get through this.

Mr. Gerretsen, are you already through it? Is that what the thumbs-up is for?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I read it earlier. It's the definition of it. Yes, I'm good with it, thanks.

The Chair: Okay.

I have Mr. Alghabra, Mr. Tocher and Ms. Blaney. Thank you.

Dr. Duncan, you already signalled. I'm sorry, but I miss it sometimes.

I'm trying to skim again and refresh my memory so that I know exactly what you're talking about.

We've moved on from that section. Are there any comments on the second section, section B.ii, on parliamentary privilege and the courts?

Okay, I've seen thumbs-up from some people. I'm sorry, but I might have missed a few. I saw thumbs-up from the Liberals, from the Bloc, Ms. Blaney, Mr. Brassard and Corey Tochor. That's perfect.

Go ahead, Mr. Brassard.

Mr. John Brassard: I have a question.

I'm being mindful of the time here. We have a hard stop at two o'clock, right? I have to leave Ottawa at that time.

• (1330)

The Chair: That's correct.

Mr. John Brassard: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: We're doing quite well right now. Are we good to move on to section B.iii? Okay.

We have another meeting in which we'll have time to go through some of this, but it would be good to get through at least the ideas in this report at this point so that we're at a stage where, when our recommendations go in, we can have enough time left to discuss them in the next meeting. That would be ideal.

We're on section B.iii, quorum in the House of Commons.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I have a suggestion here.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I noticed that the "living tree" interpretation of the Constitution was mentioned later on in the report. I think the intention of this clause being interpreted within the modern context was highlighted, which I remember was pretty key in that testimony by Mr. Dufresne. I wonder if we can also reference it here in this section, which I think is extremely relevant.

In any reader's mind, they may not make the connection if they're reading that section later on. I think it would be good to have it here as well.

The Chair: Go ahead, Andre.

Mr. Andre Barnes: If I may, I know exactly what Mr. Turnbull is referring to. It appears later because that's the interpretation of quorum, as opposed to just the rule of quorum itself, which is very straightforward. It was more how quorum would be looked at by the courts, and this was Mr. Dufresne's interpretation, whereas this section is just meant to say what quorum is.

However, I'm more than happy to add it there, if that's what the committee would like.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Normandin.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: My comment is somewhat along the same lines. I remember asking a question about paragraph 49, if quorum refers to members physically present in the House. We had an interesting discussion about it. Mr. Pelletier and others responded that it was more a meeting of minds. I am wondering if the question of physical presence should go there.

[English]

The Chair: Andre, do you have any comments on that?

Mr. Andre Barnes: I could certainly add it there, yes, definitely. Unfortunately, I did not include it elsewhere in the report, so that would be a place it could go.

The Chair: Okay. All right.

We'll go on to the next section, "Language rights in Parliament".

Mr. John Brassard: I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but did we come to a conclusion on the quorum in the House?

The Chair: Do you mean Mr. Turnbull's point? Is that what you're—

Mr. John Brassard: Right, because I thought Andre made a pretty compelling argument as to what the difference was, so I just don't know whether we've—

The Chair: I was really leaving the ball in your court on that one. I heard no response from anybody on it, and Andre, obviously, is going to do whatever the committee wishes. He did give an explanation that it was in reference to an interpretation of the courts.

Mr. John Brassard: Right, okay.

The Chair: I guess I could clarify.

Ryan, would you like that to be put into this paragraph?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Yes.

I definitely agreed with Madam Normandin's point as well, and I think that would also be a welcome addition. The community of spirit and the living tree interpretation of the Constitution Act is really important for how we interpret quorum.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

On language rights in Parliament, Madam Normandin, do you have a comment?

Mr. John Brassard: I do, Madam Chair.

The first one is in relation to the footnote at the bottom, footnote 20. When I read the first two paragraphs, it seems to me that the footnote would be better placed after the first paragraph rather than the second one. I don't know if Andre would agree with me on that or what the rationale was.

Paragraph one refers to the Constitution Act, yet the second paragraph refers to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I guess the thumbs-up means that he would be in agreement.

• (1335)

The Chair: Yes, he's in agreement. Thanks for pointing that out. Even for seven o'clock in the morning, I had the footnotes, but I definitely haven't seen the footnotes in depth.

Mr. John Brassard: It was well before seven.

The Chair: Yes.

Okay. It looks like everyone is okay with this section. I saw a lot of thumbs up.

Okay, Mr. Tochor, thank you.

Mr. Richards, did you already...?

Ms. Duncan?

All right. It looks like everyone is good.

The next section is “Canada's Seat of Parliament”, section B.v.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, I'm a bit of a history buff. There is a reference in line 28 to the Victoria Building. When the fire happened, it was the Victoria Memorial Museum that Parliament ended up going to. The Victoria Building is on Wellington Street. That's just for clarification.

The Chair: That's a great catch.

Andre, did you get that?

Mr. Andre Barnes: I would only say that I looked that up and, darn it, I got it wrong.

Mr. John Brassard: Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks for bringing that up. I think reading some of these sections about the Constitution and the history of Parliament makes you realize what a special place it is we work in and what a privilege it is to be a member of Parliament.

Mr. John Brassard: I wouldn't want senators to be upset with the report when they read it, given that the reference to the Victoria Building would create confusion.

The Chair: Yes.

We're on section C, “Procedural considerations of modifying sittings of the House in response to COVID-19”.

Go ahead, Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Going back to the previous point, I was wondering if this is where it is supposed to go. I do not remember seeing it anywhere else. It seems to me that Dr. Raymond suggested that it would be difficult to move the seat of Parliament right now because it would be impossible to enforce public health regulations elsewhere.

[*English*]

The Chair: That is correct. I think we move on to looking at procedural and technological considerations—I'm just trying to refresh my memory—but not the physical...

Go ahead, Andre.

Mr. Andre Barnes: I will certainly add Madame Normandin's point here, but what she is asking about does appear later on in the report, where Dr. Raymond speaks about an audit. He said to look beginning to end if you're going to change locations. You have to consider everything, not just the building. It does appear later on in the report, but I will certainly put it here.

The Chair: Thank you for the point.

Is everyone good with this section? I see some nodding, some thumbs up. Perfect.

Thank you, Mr. Richards, Mr. Alghabra and Mr. Brassard.

We'll move to section D, which is on technological and practical considerations—sorry, I'm jumping ahead of myself. We're still on procedural considerations. I gave a lot of time for that little section before. In my head I was going through the next section already. I'm guessing many of you have already had time to review this section again.

Is everyone okay with this section? Everyone seems to be good.

We'll go to section D. Now we're on the technological and practical considerations.

• (1340)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Chair, as we get down to lines 33, 34 and 35, I recall that Mr. Patrice was asked this. It has, “For example, the number of support staff for virtual meetings was double that required for in-person meetings.”

Andre, correct me if I'm wrong, but did we not hear that the number was roughly the same to support both virtual and in-house sittings? The number was roughly 55. I think that needs to be corrected to reflect the accuracy of the information we received, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

I think this was touched upon before as well in Madam Normandin's comments.

Andre, can you clarify?

Mr. Andre Barnes: I could see two approaches to fixing this. One would be to simply delete it. The second would be to add the additional information Mr. Brassard is suggesting.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: May I also jump in here and make a quick suggestion?

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I would prefer if this made reference to a point in time. As we know, with the adoption of any new platform, technology or procedural changes, there are going to be changes over time. Staffing may increase at the beginning, but adoption of that new technology, over time, may decrease the number of people who are required in the future. It may actually, in fact, change. I'd just like to reference the point in time, if possible.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madame Chair, this also goes back to my earlier comment about clarity regarding how many staff are in those two different frameworks. I think that's important. I appreciate what Mr. Turnbull said as well. It's about identifying that period of time as well.

The Chair: You're absolutely right, Ms. Blaney. This is the concern you were raising before.

It seems as though we have more suggestions to further clarify and add more information, Andre.

Mr. Andre Barnes: I think I have it. I could draft something up and see what the committee thinks about it at the next meeting.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

All right. Other than that, we're moving on to section E, then, which is "Modified procedures at national legislatures in response to COVID-19".

We'll start with Scotland and section E.i.(a), "Overview".

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Chair, I don't know that I have anything specific I want to talk about in terms of what's there. For me, it's more about what maybe isn't there.

I know that when I asked our clerk earlier about some of the other witnesses, some had declined or couldn't be invited for various reasons, so we didn't have a chance to hear from some of the others like Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, which are often among those we use for comparison when we look at our systems.

Even though we weren't able to hear from them during the testimony, it doesn't mean we shouldn't try to gather advice or information about what they're doing, to inform what we're doing. I think it would be good if we were to ask our analyst to add some sort of summary of what's happening in those three jurisdictions. It would be good information for our report.

Then also, I know he is already working on the provincial stuff, but I think we should maybe reserve a spot here for it and for some summary of it once we've had a chance to see it. Maybe at this point we could even instruct that some language be drafted for the report itself, based on the stuff that Andre's pulling together for us on the provincial aspect.

Again, this is just to point out some things we should probably be adding somewhere in this area .

● (1345)

The Chair: I don't know if we would really have enough time. At this point we don't have enough time to get advice, but I do take your point that we could add in from Andre's research as to what these jurisdictions are doing.

Mr. Blake Richards: I wasn't asking for any advice. I was simply indicating that we should be adding in what you're suggesting, which is what's happening in other jurisdictions.

Those are some of the more comparable ones. The same thing goes for the provinces. Obviously it would be a no-brainer that we might want to look at what some of the provinces are doing as well. I'm just suggesting that maybe we could draft something that could summarize all of that information.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Andre.

Mr. Andre Barnes: The briefing note Mr. Richards asked for about the provinces is in translation. It's due back today, or tomorrow at the very latest. I can drop that in. That's no problem.

Australia, New Zealand, and the United States appeared in a briefing note that was circulated to the committee about two weeks ago. Time might not permit that much updating on what they're doing. There's a bit of a risk that it might be one or two weeks out of

date, but if the committee is comfortable with that, I could drop it in. It's already translated. The translation bureau wouldn't be upset with me.

The Chair: Even in terms of our health information and everything, with the way things are moving so fast in this pandemic, by the time we present this report, there is probably going to be more than just that area that will be a little bit out of date. I think it is what it is when it comes to that, but I don't see any problems with including those jurisdictions.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I'm really supportive of that idea. I thought that the briefing was really good. Looking at those other jurisdictions was helpful, and they seemed quite progressive as well.

The Chair: There are hands up, which I think are from before.

Ms. Blaney and Mr. Richards, you have your hands up, so I was wondering if you could put your hands down in the participants column. It just throws me off.

Mr. Brassard, you have a point.

Mr. John Brassard: I'm scanning the page here, because we're still on page 9. I think we need to go back, Andre.

Line 3 says, "Internet connectivity and speed varied throughout the country." I think that should be "varies throughout the country" so that it's more accurately reflected in the report.

Mr. John Brassard: The other one that I would point out is that in the testimony, going down to line 32 where it says, "On 1 April 2020, Parliament met with a reduced quorum (of 129 total members, 79 attended in-person)", I think we need to look at replacing "79" to "no more than 79" because, if I recall, the reference to 79 was to how many chairs were kept in the chamber to permit adequate physical distancing. I think it needs to reflect a little more accurately what we heard as testimony. I'll leave that to Andre to look at.

The Chair: You're correct.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brassard.

We are on Scotland, and that suggestion was made regarding the section that's referring to Scotland.

We've moved on. Is everyone okay with the...?

● (1350)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Chair, can I just clarify that those additions would be in a separate section, and not in the Scotland section, obviously. Is that right?

The Chair: Andre, would you comment?

Mr. Andre Barnes: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thought would be to add the countries in alphabetical order, and then the provinces in their own section, but also alphabetically.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Madam Normandin.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Alphabetical order will not be the same in the other languages, however.

[English]

The Chair: That's correct.

What do we do about that, Andre? What do you usually do?

Mr. Andre Barnes: This is a very difficult question.

Would it matter if the order wasn't the same in both languages? I guess it would throw things off if the order wasn't the same in both languages.

Let me mull this problem over, please.

The Chair: I think that we should ideally try to have it all in the same section regardless of whether you're looking at the French version or the English version, but I leave that up to you, Andre. Really, it's about how you can logically put it together.

Mr. Andre Barnes: I was just thinking perhaps of some sort of geographical east-to-west arrangement.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Eric Duncan: We could consider the order of provinces entering Confederation.

The Chair: That could be it.

Is everyone okay with the first part of the Scotland section?

Section E.i.(b) is "Changes to Standing Orders". This is still in the Scotland section. I'm seeing a lot of thumbs up already for changes to the Standing Orders.

Go ahead, Madam Normandin.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I don't know if it is only in the French version, but under "Modifications au *Règlement*" it says "on a remplacé 'le système de vote électronique' par 'un système de vote électronique.'" "

Mr. Andre Barnes: I will correct that.

[English]

The Chair: It's in the English version as well. Yes, it was in both versions.

On E.i.(c), "Future plans", can you give me thumbs up for that, and for section E.i.(d), "Pandemic response plan"? We can take a look at both together.

Mr. Eric Duncan: I have a quick comment, if I may.

The Chair: Yes, of course, Mr. Duncan.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Under "Future plans", because of the time-lines, if I recall, Scotland, in particular with the U.K., is reviewing their decisions or their renewal, I believe, next week. It's getting really tight for timelines on the report, but I follow with interest the example of Scotland about looking to expand the number of virtual committee meetings being held.

If Andre is monitoring that at all, and there is something in the next few days, even for my own interest, I would be interested to

see what they do, what standing orders they change and those types of things. I'm not sure if there will be any updates before then, but maybe we could keep an eye on all of those to get the latest ones.

The Chair: Thank you for that point.

Go ahead, Christine.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Coming back to what I said before, in the end, I believe what was written was correct if "le système de vote" was replaced with "un système de vote". I had read that too quickly.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

All right, so we're good with sections E.i.(c) and E.i.(d), "Future plans" and "Pandemic response plan".

Mr. Brassard, do you have a point? No. Okay, it looks like we're good.

We can move on to the United Kingdom, then.

Everyone seems to be good with the overview. Next is section E.ii.(b), "Hybrid House of Commons".

• (1355)

Mr. Eric Duncan: I have a note on that point specifically. Maybe a line could be added about the length of the period that they had. The original, I believe, was May 12 or sometime next week, but they're going to review and/or extend or modify. Then, specifically on page 13, with reference to lines 1 and 2, I believe the day we met they were testing the remote voting as we spoke, so there may be some more information from Mr. Hamlyn on their findings on that, which would be of great value if it could be added.

The Chair: Okay. You seem to take just as much interest as Mr. Reid used to take in our other parliamentary cousins.

Mr. Eric Duncan: I don't want to give away how big a nerd I am, but I think in our first few meetings I was guilty.

Mr. John Brassard: I'll tell you how big of a nerd he is.

The Chair: Are you calling Mr. Reid a nerd? I don't know—

Mr. Eric Duncan: Yes, I am.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Chair, are we still on the section on "Hybrid House of Commons"?

The Chair: Yes. Are you okay with it?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Yes, I am.

The Chair: Is everyone okay to move on to the second part of that section, on Wales? Okay, it looks like everyone is nodding their heads. Are there any issues with the overview on Wales?

Go ahead, Mr. Brassard.

Mr. John Brassard: I beat him. I thought Mr. Duncan was going to jump in here.

The Chair: No, he didn't. You beat him.

Mr. John Brassard: Good.

I'll just note as well, Madam Chair, that I think there needs to be a footnote acknowledging that the National Assembly for Wales was renamed, effective May 6, to "Welsh Parliament".

The Chair: It was effective May 6? Okay.

Andre, did you get that? It's the Welsh Parliament.

Mr. Andre Barnes: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. We're good with the overview.

On "Changes to Standing Orders" for Wales, I'm getting some thumbs up for that section.

Can you include "Challenges" in there as well, since it's so short? It's "Changes to Standing Orders" and then the "Challenges" section, which is just a sentence or two sentences. Is everyone good with that? Okay.

Seeing as it's 1:59, is everyone okay with the "Challenges" section, so that the whole Wales section is good to go? Okay.

I think this might be a good stopping point, then. I was thinking of carrying on. The eager part of me wanted to carry on, but I think it actually makes sense to create the breaking point here. We'll carry on from here in our next meeting.

I don't anticipate this portion of it to take much longer, but I do want to remind everybody that we would like to have the recommendations in for tomorrow. Now that you can see the whole report, it may be even easier, as you were thinking about recommendations this week. If you can have those ready for tomorrow and submit those to us, we can see where they fit into a section, and then we can have a discussion on that at the next meeting. We can have all of that well prepared for you at the next meeting.

Go ahead, Christine.

• (1400)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: What is the deadline if someone wanted to submit a supplementary report? We had planned to perhaps do this for the French portion of the translation. It is quite specific to the Bloc Québécois.

What is the deadline? How does one proceed and how does one go about translating the documents or reports?

The Clerk: I have inquired about any dissenting or supplementary opinions. They must be filed by the end of the day on May 13 at the latest, so that we can table the report on the clerk's desk by May 15.

There are certain terms and conditions for producing such opinions. Members are responsible for providing them to me in both official languages. The task of having them translated is yours. Opinions may not exceed 10 pages or be longer than the report itself. This report will be more than 10 pages long, so the maximum length of opinions is 10 pages and they must be tabled in both official languages by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13.

[English]

The Chair: Does everyone have that? The deadline for dissenting opinions or supplementary opinions is 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13.

If there are supplementary opinions, the rest of the committee may want them in the main report, so I'd also advise speaking to other members from other parties. I know everyone has a good working relationship, so if you can speak to one another offline as well, I would highly recommend it, because the more we have in our report that is a consensus, I think the better. Of course everyone is free to have a supplementary or dissenting opinion.

Could recommendations be in for tomorrow? Please just email them.

Are there any other comments?

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Chair, we're suggesting it be by the end of the day tomorrow.

The Chair: I think that will be fine.

Mr. Blake Richards: Okay.

With regard to the dissenting—

The Chair: Justin, Andre, is that okay? Is the end of day tomorrow good? It is. Okay.

Mr. Blake Richards: With regard to the dissenting report, it has to be presented on May 15. Is that correct?

The Clerk: Mr. Richards, the full report, including any supplementary or dissenting opinions, has to be deposited with the office of the Clerk by May 15. Therefore, given the production time that would be required, we would need dissenting opinions or supplementary opinions no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 13, which is the Wednesday two days before.

Mr. Blake Richards: I would assume that a lot of that is cut and paste. I don't imagine that will be a huge problem, but if it ends up that we have to request something like noon or something on May 14, could that still be accommodated? I don't even know if we'll have a dissenting opinion or how long it would be or any of that. I don't expect it would be an issue with what you're asking for, but I would like to ask for maybe noon on May 14 if it were absolutely necessary. We would obviously do everything we could to have it before that.

The Clerk: I've talked to the Parliamentary Publications team and they've indicated to me that they would need a certain amount of time. The suggestion they had in terms of their deadline was end of day on the 13th.

I can definitely go back to see if there is some leeway, but I think that if we could keep the deadline as May 13 at 5:00 p.m. as a good working rule, it would be consistent with the technical advice I got back from the publishing team.

• (1405)

Mr. Blake Richards: Perhaps you could go back and just double-check that. I'm comfortable that it should be okay. I know that sometimes it does take some time, and I want to make sure we leave the maximum amount of time in case it is needed, so maybe you could go back to check. However, we will obviously do everything we can to make sure it's ready by the end of the day on the 13th if it is required.

The Clerk: I can endeavour to do that.

The Chair: Okay.

As it stands right now, on Wednesday by the end of the business day at 5:00 p.m., we would need the dissenting and supplementary opinions, and Justin will ask about the recommendations.

Don't forget to have recommendations in tomorrow, and please be ready for our next meeting on May 12. That's when we will go through the rest of the report and adopt the main section of the report, and then of course we can add dissenting and supplementary opinions of no more than 10 pages.

Thank you for all your input and feedback. I think we're going to have a great report by the end of this process.

Goodbye. The meeting is adjourned.

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