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# Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

EVIDENCE

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Tuesday, May 12, 2020

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Chair: Ms. Ruby Sahota





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Tuesday, May 12, 2020

• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.)):** Good morning, everyone. We're going to get started right on time, seeing as we have a lot to get through.

I call this meeting to order. Welcome to meeting number 16 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 the parliamentary duties in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since we have no witnesses, I'm not going to go through what's required under the motion. However, because we do have some subs who may not have done a virtual committee as of yet, I'll just mention some of the procedural rules that this committee will operate under and some reminders of how to keep the committee orderly.

The interpretation in the video conference is going to work very much like in a regular committee. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of either floor, English or French. Please choose the language that you are speaking in, and if you do choose to change languages in the middle of speaking, then you have to switch the language preference down at the bottom. It just gives a better sound quality. When you're on "floor" you tend to hear the interpreter and the speaker at the same volume, and that's not ideal.

Before speaking, please wait until you are recognized by name. When you are ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate the mike. You can also hold down the space bar to activate the mike and when you are done speaking, you release the space bar to go back to mute. If there are any points of order during the meeting, unmute the mike and state that you have a point of order and I'll recognize you so that you can make your point. If anyone then wishes to speak to the point of order, you can do so by clicking on the participants list and you will see that there is a "Raise Hand" icon and you can click on that.

A few other reminders are to speak slowly and clearly for the interpreters. When you're not speaking, make sure your mike is on mute. As we have said many times, the use of a headset is strongly encouraged. If you don't have a headset provided by the House of Commons, then please see if your office or somewhere around you can provide a headset that has a mike.

We're going to turn our attention to the draft report. I should remind everybody that we did have this conversation last time. This committee meeting is not in camera; it's a public committee meet-

ing, because the order that PROC was given by the House of Commons on April 11 requires all committee meetings that are virtual to be webcast to the public on ParIVU.

Today, remember that we have to finish the consideration of the draft report. This is to be submitted on May 15. Therefore, it would be ideal that we complete this report today. The clerk and I and all of the party whips have arranged for a contingency plan in case that does not happen. We will not be able to go past two o'clock today because there's another committee after us that needs the room and the support services, but we have arranged for a slot to be available for us tomorrow, Wednesday, from three o'clock until six o'clock, if we were to go overtime and not be able to adopt the entire report today.

Mr. Richards.

• (1105)

**Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC):** On that point, if we do end up having to go into tomorrow, the deadline that was put on us for dissenting reports was the end of the day.

**The Chair:** Tomorrow.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** If we're to meet from three o'clock until six o'clock, that will become a little bit difficult because we won't even know what the actual report has in it until the end of the day. I wonder if, in that instance, the deadline for the dissenting report could be extended until noon the following day to allow us that opportunity. It would be pretty difficult to provide something before the main report is finished being drafted.

**The Chair:** Point noted, and maybe we can have this discussion at the end of today's meeting. We can see how far we get, and then we'll consider what could be done in terms of that deadline.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Sure. That's fine, but I think it's good for our clerk to have that information now, because obviously it would be very unreasonable to expect a dissenting report to be provided before the main report was completed, if that were to happen. Maybe we'll get done today and it won't be an issue—I agree—but should it become one, I certainly hope that can be extended, because it would be quite unreasonable, I think, to expect anything else.

**The Chair:** We can talk about it at the end of this meeting. I do believe that the requirement was for dissenting and supplementary opinions to be in by end of day tomorrow, on the 13th—

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Yes, I agree that it was, but obviously when conditions change, the requirement should change as well.

**The Chair:** Yes, okay. We'll discuss that at the end of the meeting. My hope is that we're going to get through this, and the quicker we get started, the quicker that becomes a possibility. We'll leave a bit of time at the end to discuss this issue and figure it out so that we have a reasonable alternative.

The draft report now covers all meetings. All of you should have the second version of the draft report. At the last meeting we were going through the first version. All of the changes that have been discussed have been incorporated into this report, but we had only gotten up to about page 15 of the last report. The recommendations that have been submitted by all the parties have also been incorporated in this report.

As all of you probably have read the report, I'm going to go through the report quite quickly, especially the first 15 pages, because we've already been through those. We're really just going through it again to make sure you're okay with the changes that were made.

The latter part of the report has all of the recommendations. You'll see that in the recommendations there is some overlap with different recommendations. A lot of the parties were thinking along the same lines in terms of some of the recommendations, so maybe we can work on figuring out how we can keep some in, take some out or amalgamate others. That choice is up to you, so that we can avoid some redundancy in the report.

I think that covers just about everything, now that I look at all my notes, so we should get started.

I'm going to start with page 1. Perhaps we can first just get through the writing of the whole report, and then we can go back into the recommendations. They start two-thirds into the report, the actual recommendations, so let's go through the text of the whole report and finalize that, and then we'll get into the recommendations.

Is that okay with you, Andre and Justin? Do you think that will work? Okay.

We'll go to page 1 of the draft report. There were two versions submitted. You can take a look at the version that shows the track changes, or you can take a look at the clean draft version. It's up to you. The track changes will show you exactly where the changes were made. We can quickly address those changes and get through the 15 pages. If you do have the track changes report in front of you, maybe we'll use that for now so that we can quickly go to those thoughts and address those issues.

Christine, did you have a comment to make?

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Chair, could you refer to the sections rather than the pages? That way, it'll be the same for everyone, in French and in English, and it'll be the same as well should there be changes.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Absolutely, and thank you for that reminder. I tried to do that last time. I almost would have forgotten.

We will start with the introduction. There was just one change made in the introduction.

In order to indicate if there are any issues, just use "Raise Hand" in the "Participants" section. I'll keep monitoring that to see if there's a raised hand. I'll also try to monitor the screen and, just like we were doing last time, if you could give me a thumbs-up, we can keep moving on. You can do it by using "Reactions" at the bottom of your screen or you can just physically give me a thumbs-up. Either way, I see it and I know there's agreement.

Okay. So the introduction looks good? All right.

In section i, "Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs' study on Parliamentary Duties and the COVID-19 Pandemic", there are changes near the end of it. Is everyone good with that section?

Mr. Brassard.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Chair, we're still in that section. There should be a correction.

On page 2 of that section, line 28 says, "open discussion about the reports contents". It should be "report's" as opposed to "reports".

I'd like to see the following added after "report's contents": "and especially witnesses' evidence."

**The Chair:** Okay. You're looking at the English version, page....

**Mr. John Brassard:** It's page 2, line 28.

**The Chair:** Okay. Sorry.

**Mr. John Brassard:** It says, "have a frank and open discussion about the reports contents". "Reports" should have an apostrophe before the "s".

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Afterwards, I'd like it to say, "and especially witnesses' evidence." It should read, "the Committee expressed deep concern that reviewing a confidential draft report during a public meeting adversely affected their ability to have a frank and open discussion about the report's contents, and especially witnesses' evidence."

I think we made that clear in our discussions the other day. I'm not going to rehash it. The members who were here understand the concerns of not dealing with witness evidence in camera or in confidence.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Is everyone okay with those corrections? Okay.

We're going to move on to section ii, on notable other decisions.

Sorry, I see Mr. Tochor has something.

First we'll go to Mr. Brassard.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Sorry, as we moved on to the next page, I didn't realize we were in the same section.

Line 2 of page 3 says, "eight meetings and heard from 38 of witnesses." The word "of" should be removed on that line. It should say, "and heard from 38 witnesses", not "38 of witnesses".

**The Chair:** Yes, I have it. There are a couple of other things like this that I found throughout the report too, minor things. Keep pointing them out as we go along.

Andre, I think you're probably going to have somebody review this report one final time. Will you, in case we miss any minor editing issues like that?

• (1115)

**Mr. Andre Barnes (Committee Researcher):** I'll talk to the people in PPD. They're the production people. I'll see if they'll do that, but I'll take another look at it.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** The problem is that when you read it so many times, you're kind of blind to your mistakes. Sorry about these.

**The Chair:** It's not a problem. We'll point out those things.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Sorry, Madam Chair.

I just want to make it clear, Andre, that I'm not pointing out these as an indictment on your ability. You've done a terrific job. It's just that these little things will help finalize the report. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Of course we want a polished and well-written report with good grammar.

Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** In section ii, there are a couple of things that I think need to be changed.

First, the end of the first paragraph says, "the House stands suspended" and I believe it should be, "the House stands adjourned."

The other one is in the second paragraph, line 20. Hopefully it is the same in the French version, or close. Line 20 says, "House per week on Tuesdays and Thursdays with 90 minutes for questions." We're at 95 minutes of questions.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Blaney.

Are we good to go, Andre? Okay.

We'll move on to "Background".

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Brassard.

**Mr. John Brassard:** I had my hand raised on section ii.

**The Chair:** You're on section ii, okay.

**Mr. John Brassard:** I'm glad Ms. Blaney pointed that out. That was one of the issues.

I think a later section of the report refers to "suspension" as well, but we'll get to that.

The other issue is on line 19. It should say, "15 minute period for questions to cabinet ministers followed by Take-note debates", as opposed to "and Take-note debates."

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Is anybody opposed to that change? I guess it clarifies it a little bit.

Is everybody good with section ii?

Is everybody good with section A.i, the background and overview?

I'm going to go through these quite quickly, because we already went through them last time.

Section A.ii is "Challenges posed by COVID-19 to in-person parliamentary sittings". That looks good.

Section A.iii had a change in line 12. Is everybody okay with section A.iii, on health and safety in the workplace?

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair, in line 14 I'd like to add a sentence, if I can, that reflects Mr. Patrice's evidence from May 4, noting that the same number of staff are also required for virtual sittings. If you read above, you'll see the rationale for that: "The number of individuals employed by the House administration required for normal sittings of the House and sittings with a reduced number of members is 55." Something that reflects his evidence of May 4 suggesting that the same number of staff are required for virtual sittings is a line to be added there, Andre, if we could.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** If I may, Madam Chair, I believe it's noted on page 13. One paragraph has been added, but it's more or less clear.

[English]

**The Chair:** I did read it somewhere, and that's why I'm a little... Here it is.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** Yes, it's on page 13, in my version.

**The Chair:** In the clean version, it's page 12. Let me take a look.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Yes, it's page 12, sorry.

**The Chair:** I have it on page 12, line 3.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Okay, yes, that's fine.

• (1120)

**The Chair:** There are minor corrections on page 12. I don't know if I should point them out now or wait until we get there. I'll wait until we get there.

Are we good for section A.iii?

Next, we have section B.i, "Parliamentary privilege".

Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Line 4 in paragraph 4 reads “the House's right regulate”. It should read “the House's right to regulate”.

**The Chair:** Are you in “Parliamentary privilege”?

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Yes, I'm in “Parliamentary privilege”, paragraph 4. At the end of line 4, it reads “the House's right regulate”. It just needs a “to”.

**The Chair:** Yes, it should be “the House's right to regulate”. Andre, do you see that section? That's page 7, line 4.

Are we good with “Parliamentary privilege”?

Section B.ii is “Parliamentary privilege and the courts”. It looks as though everyone is good with that one.

Section B.iii is “Quorum in the House of Commons”.

Mr. Brassard.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair, for section iii, page 9, line 11, where it says, “This approach has been compared to a living tree”, I would like to see if we can add the sentence relating to the content, just to put it in context, of Mr. Dufresne's statement in his testimony, which was, “Of course, it's possible that a court could disagree with this interpretation. In that scenario, the most serious implication of a court not finding a House proceeding to have the mandated quorum via virtual presence would be that what was adopted in the impugned proceeding could be invalidated.” It would just put into context that statement.

Now, there are other areas.... I don't know how Andre could do it, whether he could do it as a quote under that line or whether he could make that a footnote, but I'll leave that to him. I just think it's important that there's context to the statement that Mr. Dufresne made with respect to the “living tree” argument.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Andre, do you recall the context?

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** Yes, I do. I believe what Mr. Brassard said kind of captures things accurately, yes.

**The Chair:** All right. So, we're good with “Quorum in the House of Commons”.

With regard to “Language rights in Parliament”, there were no changes to this section. Well, there was a footnote change, footnote number 26.

Okay. Are we all good with this section, then?

Yes, Mr. Duncan.

**Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** I'm sorry. On that language rights [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

**The Chair:** You muted and unmuted yourself many times.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** On page 10, just at the end of that section on the language requirements or language rights, could we add something like, “On the other hand, increasing the complexity of the proceedings may make it more difficult and increase the number of people required”? I think that may be alluding to that, too, that it's not a set number right now; it's more complex. As we go along, it's

going to require more officials. I think it's important to note that that's a bit of a stress on the interpreters.

• (1125)

**The Chair:** Yes, Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** The other addition that I think is important and which isn't in here—and I'm sorry I didn't see it sooner—is that there's nothing referring to the right of indigenous languages to be.... I'm wondering about that because that is now added, and we haven't mentioned that at all.

**The Chair:** Yes. PROC did a really long study on indigenous languages and their use in the House. You're right. While we were hearing testimony, I was thinking quite a lot about that.

Andre.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** The comment does appear later on in the report about language rights. [*Inaudible—Editor*] made the point, so it does show up later. Would you like it in both places?

**The Chair:** Yes. I think it's appropriate to probably have it under the heading.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I agree. Thank you for that.

**The Chair:** All right.

“Canada's seat of Parliament” is good.

No, there's an issue.

Yes, Christine.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** For our part, we've recommended that an assessment be made of another place where we could sit. The recommendation is set out much later in the report. I'm wondering if it would be more relevant to put it in this paragraph here, following Dr. Raymond's recommendation.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** The recommendation is added in. It's a Bloc recommendation—not that I guess it matters as chair—but I did like it. It's a good recommendation, and it is—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** It's on page 47 in my version; it's much further on.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, but it is under an appropriate heading, and that's for location or something. Hold on.

In the first half of the report, we don't really have any recommendations added in. We're then addressing, in the discussion portion of the report, all of these issues, and that's where the recommendations come in.

Andre, you could explain better than I probably can how you intended the layout to be. Let me just find that.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** No, Madam Chair, I think you explained it the way I had thought about it or the way it's been laid out. The first half of the report deals with information, context and background. The second half is discussion and recommendations.

It's the committee's report. The recommendations can go anywhere. The way it's structured currently is that the recommendations come in the second half, with the discussion.

**The Chair:** Yes.

The Bloc recommendation is put into the section “Alternate locations”.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** Yes.

**The Chair:** I don't know; I think it's quite appropriate to have a recommendation. Otherwise, we'll have no recommendations for that section.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Madam Chair, unless I'm mistaken, our recommendation is under “Order and decorum”. It may not be the best place, in my opinion. I won't make it an issue, but I think it would be more appropriate to put it under “Canada's seat of Parliament”.

[*English*]

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** If it helps, Madam Chair, I may have made a mistake and put it in the wrong spot.

**The Chair:** I think it's been put in twice. Let me take a look and see if it's the same or slightly different.

No, it's slightly different. In the English version, it's Bloc recommendation 7 and it's under “Alternate locations”.

Is it different in the French version?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I'm mistaken, Madam Chair. I was looking at another recommendation. I'm sorry.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** All right.

Other than that, then, are we good with “Canada's seat of Parliament”? Okay.

Next is section C, “Procedural considerations of modifying sittings of the House in response to COVID-19”.

Yes, Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I have one suggestion.

I'm trying to go between both versions. I actually did my work on the clean one, so forgive me as I try to do this.

**The Chair:** I'm going through both too. The clean one was just nicer to read.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** This talks about our role, about “a member's parliamentary duties”. For me, my number one commitment is always to my constituents.

I just want to ask the committee if we could also add to that list. After “debating, legislating, the business of supply, committee work and holding the government to account”, I would add a part that says “representing constituents”.

● (1130)

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

Whenever I give school presentations on government and the role of a parliamentarian, I always, always—foremost—talk about the role to constituents. I think that's important.

Andre, can you add that in? All right.

Turning to section D, to the technological and practical considerations, there was a big change here.

I'll just point out, too, that on page 12, line 4, of the English version, the word “for” needs to be stricken. It's the word right after “staff”, so that it says, “the number of support staff was double than that required”. The word “than” needs to be added in and “for” needs to be taken out, or else it could be reworded slightly.

Okay, Andre?

Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I was going to say the same thing as you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay. Perfect.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** Madam Chair, on the same point in that section that's amended about the first virtual sittings and the number of support staff, could we acknowledge there that if it gets more complex in terms of hearings or types of committees or whatever it may be, it may require additional further staff?

I think it's important to note that the more we do, the more staff will be required, and to have that understanding in there.

**The Chair:** Is it not in there? I remember reading it that way, that it was going to require more.

As it gets easier, though, less will be required, but you want it to state that if it gets more complicated, more will be required.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** I wasn't speaking to the complexity of it. It's one thing to get used to it, but, again, it's going to increase the complexity. On the other hand, the longer we go on, the easier it's going to get, but the more complex we get, and the more we do, the more is going to be required.

Hopefully we can get both factors that way. That would be important.

**The Chair:** Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I would just make a point in follow-up to Mr. Duncan's point, and I get his sentiments.

I'm wondering, since this is the more factual portion of the report, whether that was reflected in the testimony we heard. Maybe he could point to a specific example of testimony that said it would get more complex. I think intuitively I would agree that it may. It also might get easier as technology is adopted.

Do we have any testimony on that?

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** I would argue, as we discussed and I think we will discuss further in the recommendations about voting, for example, that if we have more committees or if the types of tools we give committees change, that may require extra people if there is voting or whatever there may be.

I think in those examples they spoke about how there's more technology that could be adapted, and more details committees could be empowered with, but I think it's going to make the meeting more complex.

Again, I think it wasn't specifically alluded to, but I think it's obvious that if we're getting into voting, or if we're getting into more committee work at some time or in some form, that would make it more difficult, or more complex, and more hands on deck would be required.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Is that an assumption you are making, or maybe some of us are making, that is not necessarily fact-based? I wonder, because I know of lots of technology tools and virtual platforms that actually reduce significantly the number of human staff or support staff required.

I don't know that what you're saying is true, and I'm not sure we heard testimony on that, so I would just push back respectfully and ask you to consider that. Maybe if we had a quote from the Hansard, then that would back up your point.

**The Chair:** Okay. We will move on from that since we got the thumbs-up. It doesn't look as though we have testimony on that.

Is that right, Andre?

• (1135)

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** I'm trying to recall some, but I don't have any offhand, unfortunately.

**The Chair:** I don't either, but good try, Mr. Duncan.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Yes.

We are looking at "E Modified procedures at national legislatures...".

We're looking at Scotland first. Is everyone good with Scotland? We had pretty much gotten through these last time. There was a little bit of a change to Scotland, but not overly complex.

Section (b) is "Changes to Standing Orders" for Scotland.

Future plans is section (c).

Pandemic response plan is section (d).

Since we're going so quickly, just raise your hand in the participants bar if there is an issue, because I'm just going to keep going through them.

Now we're on to the United Kingdom. It was just after the United Kingdom and Wales that we ended last time.

On the United Kingdom there are no changes to the overview.

For the hybrid House of Commons, there is a change at the end of that section. Is everyone okay with that change?

Mr. Brassard.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Sorry, Madam Chair.

With regard to page 17, line 9, I think somewhere in there, whether it's at the end of the sentence or even in a new paragraph, there should be a note that the U.K.'s temporary measures were scheduled to expire on May 12. The House was scheduled to debate that day, today, and I don't know the results of it because I haven't seen it. They were going to debate a renewal to May 20. At that point, on May 20, they are expected to start a two-week adjournment.

Again, I don't know what the result of today's debate was, but I think we should put a note in there just for clarity's sake to say that was what their intent was.

**The Chair:** Yes, I guess that just goes to keeping the report as updated and current as possible. We're limited by time, but I think this one is probably possible.

Is that right, André? Can you get that updated? Okay.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** One other comment that I have, Madam Chair, is regarding this section.

I like the way it has been updated at the end of the section with the specific reference to the U.K. I wonder if we could also include a reference to the MemberHub platform that has been approved based on single sign-on and multi-factor authentication, which is basically up to a standard for cybersecurity that the U.K. Parliament was okay with. I think it would be nice to see that referenced in there.

**The Chair:** Was that in the letter we received?

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** This is the document that we received from the procedure committee. It's dated May 5, 2020.

**The Chair:** Perfect.

André, will you add that in? Okay.

We're past the U.K. now and on Wales.

Okay, everyone is good with the overview and the changes to the standing orders.

Thank you.

I'll try to get to my two versions at the same time.

All right, I think we're good for the challenges section.



As for Australia, we're heading into the new part of the report that we didn't go over the last time, so I'll give everybody a bit more time.

I hope we've all done our homework, and it seems like most of you have.

Are we good with Australia?

Yes, Mr. Brassard.

• (1140)

**Mr. John Brassard:** Yes.

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

**Mr. John Brassard:** I thought we were still on the challenges.

There are a couple of things that I note. Page 19, line 2—

**The Chair:** Is this for Australia?

**Mr. John Brassard:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Page 19 is Australia and then New Zealand....

**Mr. John Brassard:** Okay, stand by.

Sorry, we're going quickly here.

**The Chair:** There's no problem.

**Mr. John Brassard:** I will have some stuff on New Zealand.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. You have stuff on New Zealand.

Is Australia good? All right.

Mr. Brassard, go ahead on New Zealand.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

There are a few things to note here. On page 19, line 2, replace "be fixed". It should be "to be fixed". I don't know if Andre would agree with me on that. Add "to be fixed by the Speakers".

On page 19, lines 4 to 7, it should read, "On 25 March 2020, the New Zealand House of Representatives announced". The issue here is that the content of the proxy votes is repeated two paragraphs later. Lines 4 to 7 is replaced with, "On 25 March 2020, the New Zealand House of Representatives announced".

The other change that I would suggest is on page 19, line 11, replace "that Parliament is suspended until 28 April 2020" with "Parliament was adjourned", so replace "Parliament is suspended" with "Parliament was adjourned". It goes back to what I said that this came up earlier when the House resumed its usual schedule of three sittings per week.

The last one is a question for Andre.

On page 19, line 22, to page 20, line 2, if the resolution referred to has any prospect of being adopted, is this going through and randomly picking private members' motions off the Order Paper? I'm curious whether—

**The Chair:** You're jumping into the United States there, right?

**Mr. John Brassard:** I'm sorry. Okay, let's stick with New Zealand.

**The Chair:** Let's just stick with New Zealand.

Andre, did you get the two changes to New Zealand?

Yes, okay.

**Mr. John Brassard:** There were three, actually.

**The Chair:** Oh, there were three? Okay. Andre has them. I only followed two.

We're good with that, and now we're going on to the United States.

Go ahead, Mr. Brassard.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Again, from line 22 to line 2 on page 20....

I'll wait.

**The Chair:** Sorry, Mr. Brassard. I was just having a sidebar with the clerk.

On the United States, Andre, you have the point made there. Have you any comments on that?

• (1145)

**Mr. John Brassard:** Andre, I don't think we discussed it. We mentioned it, but then we went back.

The report refers to a resolution that was introduced in the U.S. Senate to allow members to vote remotely rather than by coming to the Senate chamber.

Andre, does this resolution have any prospect of being adopted? I'm trying to figure out where that reference came from and whether it has any chance of being adopted. Was a private member's bill put forward?

I don't know what context we got that information from and why that specific reference is in the report.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** Madam Chair, I understand Mr. Brassard's question. This section, as well as the sections on Australia and New Zealand, was kindly provided to me by a colleague, so I'm not able to speak too intelligently about where my colleague found this information, but I can look into it.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Okay.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** If it turns out that it's not worth putting in the report, I can remove it.

**Mr. John Brassard:** That's where I'm coming from. It wasn't evidence that came to the committee, and I don't know the context for this resolution. Is it the equivalent of a private member's bill, for example, that we would see in our Parliament, which for the most part, unless it's supported by all sides, wouldn't have a chance?

There are issues related to members of the U.S. Senate, for example, casting their votes remotely. Frankly, I don't see the need, Madam Chair, to have that part of this in there for any other reason—

**The Chair:** If it's found to be accurate.... I'm just trying to cover everything we're going through right now, with all the provincial legislatures that come right after this. At our last meeting the committee requested that the analyst do his own research and insert all of these because we hadn't heard from all these different regions.

Now I'm a little confused. We've had him do all this work and put it into the report, and now we're not going to find that any of the witnesses mentioned any of these other regions, other than the ones we heard from.

**Mr. John Brassard:** That's right.

**The Chair:** However, I think Andre can go back to find out the source. Can we maybe insert that into a footnote, Andre, and make sure that the source is valid and accurate?

**Mr. John Brassard:** Again, I don't even know whether this resolution that was introduced has any chance of being passed—

**The Chair:** No, it might not.

• (1150)

**Mr. John Brassard:** If we're just putting it in, in passing, then okay. That's fine.

**The Chair:** When I read it, it seems as if the United States, other than what the Senate has done, is far behind in passing or making any changes—

**Mr. John Brassard:** You're right.

**The Chair:** —in comparison to the other countries, so I think that not a lot has been done. Even when we go to the provincial parliaments, not too much has been changed. I think they might be waiting for the federal government to take some steps before they do so; I don't know, but we see that it's very standard.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Could I ask one more question of Andre, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, sure.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Has the Senate started sitting again in the United States?

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** Sorry, I don't know, but I could probably find that out before the end of this meeting. It shouldn't be too hard to find out.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Okay, I would—

**The Chair:** Yes, we can google it.

**Mr. John Brassard:** I don't know, but maybe we can put in the report the fact that the Senate has started or has not started sitting to consider the adoption of this resolution. It's just a suggestion, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, we could add more information, perhaps, to make the context of where they're at more understandable. There may be some new updates.

Andre, since you're going to update the U.K. portion, maybe you can take a look at the United States to see if it is any closer to adopting anything or having any sittings of either house.

All right, so we're through the United States. We're going on to British Columbia.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair, again seeking a point of clarification and to keep it updated, I'll note that in lines 17 and 18, the words "The Assembly has not resumed sittings" should be replaced. I'll note that on May 6 the premier announced the provincial reopening plan, which expressly included regular sittings of the legislature as part of the next phase, expected in mid-May. Again, if the intent, as Mr. Turnbull says, is to keep the report current, I think that should be reflected on page 20, somewhere around lines 17 and 18.

**The Chair:** I don't know whether I should say this, but that's a change you may want to make in every section dealing with the provinces.

Andre, it seems as if you had a very standard way of writing all the provincial sections. The last paragraph regarded voting, the first paragraph was an overview, and the middle was about committee meetings or sittings of legislatures. The middle of the chunk is basically House sittings and committee meetings, and at the end you talked about voting.

Mr. Brassard, are you saying that you would like to see whether sittings have occurred or have not yet occurred reflected in each section?

**Mr. John Brassard:** I think what I'd like to see is a reflection of the more current information that's coming out from the provinces. I know, for example, that the legislature is sitting today in my province of Ontario, and they've announced that they're going to two sittings a week. If we're going to go through what each province is doing, I think it needs to be more reflective of the current scenario. It doesn't take much, Madam Chair. It just takes a line to reflect that.

I've gone through a whole list of the latest information. I've shared with Mr. Duncan our research on when the legislatures are going to be sitting and what the current plan is. I think a simple line at the end of—

**The Chair:** Do you mean at the end of each one?

**Mr. John Brassard:** Right. It would help in the context of where we're at currently in Canada with each of the provincial legislatures and territorial legislatures as well.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We'll go to Dr. Duncan and then Mr. Turnbull.

**Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would really like to thank Andre for the tremendous work that has been done, and to recognize that when he was asked to add in this information, he did it in a consistent manner. I really appreciate that analysis.

I'm concerned, when material has been presented in a consistent manner, that things that may or may not be liked are being asked to be removed or added. If we are going to keep it consistent, of course, when we look at opening Parliament, we are very interested in the state of the pandemic in the area. It's a very different situation across the country, and perhaps that should be acknowledged.

• (1155)

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

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** My points are along the same line as those of my colleague, Ms. Duncan, who makes some great points. Contextual relevance for each province and territory becomes almost... I think we're experiencing a snowball effect here. We had a briefing. It was consistent at the time. It wasn't originally included in the report. I think it was my colleagues from the Conservative Party who asked for those things to be included. We all agreed, and now we're asking to update them.

I want to express some concern around that in terms of consistency and point of time, and then around contextual relevance, as Ms. Duncan pointed out, which is really that all of those decisions of provincial legislatures are being made based on the specific context of the pandemic that they're in, and those can look very different across jurisdictions.

I think that's it for now.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** To Mr. Turnbull's and Dr. Duncan's point, I agree about trying to have some consistency. I think the comment that Mr. Brassard and I would agree with is that in the last few days, which I think is important, each province is looking at their own situation with the pandemic and what works for them, but I think what's omitted here is that several legislatures are looking at going back in person, probably. We have Manitoba. We have Quebec—

**The Chair:** Yes—

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** We have British Columbia. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] we acknowledge those who are doing that safely. Their own decision, I think, does show that there are examples of that happening, with the most updated information.

Andre does have my sympathy. This changes by the hour. I'm sure by the time—

**The Chair:** Mr. Duncan, it's not because of what you're saying and I don't want to have to interrupt you, but there's no translation, so not everyone can hear what you're saying right now.

We're going to suspend just for a few minutes so that the technical team can help us resolve some of these issues. I think in your case, Mr. Duncan, you had the headset plugged in and then you removed it. Something happened with your system there.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** Yes, they're going to try to call me again here. I apologize. If I have it plugged in, it gets a lot of static.

**The Chair:** It's not a problem. We'll just suspend for two minutes.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** Thank you.

• (1155)

(Pause)

• (1200)

**The Chair:** We are going to resume the meeting. We'll carry on with Mr. Duncan's remarks.

Who just said "Madam Chair"? Was it you, Mr. Brassard?

**Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC):** No, it's Mr. Tochor. I'm taking part in the COVI committee. Garnett Genuis is

going to be logging on here shortly to sit in for me on this committee. After I'm done with the other committee, I'll come back here and take part again.

**The Chair:** Sure. Could you just stay on while Garnett is logging on? Once he's fully logged on, you can leave.

**Mr. Corey Tochor:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's perfect.

We're going to resume with the comments made by Mr. Duncan.

You can repeat some of your comments so they can be translated.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be brief.

Respecting what Mr. Turnbull and Dr. Duncan had mentioned, I agree that the situation with all the legislatures is evolving on an almost hourly basis, but I think it is important that what is omitted right now is the acknowledgement that British Columbia, Manitoba and Quebec are coming back in some form of a physical presence a couple of days a week. If we could acknowledge that where it's applicable, I think that is important for context as we continue our conversations.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I want to say that I do deeply agree with Dr. Duncan. We need to also reflect what's happening within those provinces around COVID-19, because some of those decisions are made for different reasons, and I think measuring the action with the outcome is going to become a long-term part of the responsibility of all parliamentarians.

**The Chair:** [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] I don't know what's happening there.

I don't know how to proceed, really, with these sections right now—

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair, just to make a further point, I appreciate where everybody is coming from on this, but I don't think we're asking for anything more than to accurately reflect what is happening across the country with respect to provincial legislatures. It's widely reported. It's in the news. Premiers and house leaders within those provinces have come out every day and have said "This is what we're doing, and we're doing it for this reason."

To have it reflected in this report I think accurately reflects what's happening across the country. After all, that's what we're trying to do here. It's to provide Parliament with a report on what's going on. I don't see any real issue with doing that. Everybody knows that we're in the midst of a global pandemic, and each province is responding differently, as it is their right to do, but the fact is that they are responding to opening up their legislatures.

The report goes to Parliament and is to be tabled on Friday, and we should have an up-to-date report on where the legislatures are at. I don't think that's asking for much other than the truth, quite frankly, of what's going on and what's reflected across the country.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We'll go to Mr. Duncan and then Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** Could I suggest a compromise?

If we're adding into those points what Ms. Blaney and the others have mentioned, then perhaps at the beginning of section F, before we start listing the details of each province, could we allude in a sentence or two there to how the situation is evolving in each province and each legislature, as are the pandemic situations in each province, so the responses are varied? I have no problem acknowledging that, yes, it's different in P.E.I. from what it is in B.C. and in Quebec. I don't have a problem with acknowledging something at the beginning in order to allude to that situation as well.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Next we have Mr. Turnbull, and then Dr. Duncan and Ms. Blaney.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I appreciate the comments made by my colleagues, Madam Chair, and I appreciate Mr. Duncan's attempt at a middle ground or a compromise solution.

You know, I was the CEO of a company for over a decade. We did 350 research reports over that time, so I have some expertise in this area. I would never ask an analyst or researcher who did not do the original research to go and update that information with some simple Google searches just because the client didn't particularly like the results that were reported.

I'm pushing back strongly against this suggestion because I feel that it puts an added burden on the analyst to supplement research that he himself did not do. It doesn't stay true to the integrity of the research that was done at a single point in time, and just in general I think it creates additional work.

If we were to do it justice, we'd really have to look at.... To Mr. Duncan's point, having a general statement about the context being different isn't quite substantial enough for me to feel confident that the decisions that those provincial legislatures were making are adequately represented in context, because I'd really like to see an overview of what the public health scenario looks like, how many cases they have, what the trends look like, what the specific risks were for them, what their public health professionals were reporting and so on.

I think we risk creating an added bunch of work for the analyst to do right at the last minute before the report is produced. I think this information was presented to us quite a substantial number of weeks ago, and if it were the desire of the committee to have it regularly updated until the finish line, we should have expressed that in advance, in my opinion.

• (1205)

**The Chair:** All right.

Let's have Dr. Duncan and then Ms. Blaney, please.

**Hon. Kirsty Duncan:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I too am concerned. We asked Andre to do this work. That work has been done in a consistent manner, and now it appears that some of us don't like some evidence or want other evidence added in. That is not how things are done. It should be a consistent approach.

While I too appreciate Mr. Duncan's suggestion, unless it's a full public health picture of what those cases look like on the ground—and I'm not sure that we've had any of that testimony at the provin-

cial and territorial levels—I think we should stick with the analysis that was done. It was consistent.

If you're going to start cherry-picking evidence—and that's what it looks like—I think it's really important that we have that public health information for context, but I would be comfortable staying with what was initially given and what was requested.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Go ahead, Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I think I need to clarify something first of all.

I do agree that there should be an addition to the provinces about the process for their legislatures to return. As far as I can see, all of those provinces that have a plan have developed something that they are presenting, so it isn't up to us as parliamentarians to decide if provincial governments did it the way we wanted.

I know that in B.C. the plan deeply involves the public health requirements. We have a method of measurement and there's a slow rolling out of the process. There's a lot behind that, so I just want to make sure that both sides of those are recognized.

I also want to take this opportunity to respectfully disagree with Mr. Turnbull. The reality is that we are trying to do something in a very short time that is connected to the essence of our democracy. The fact is that we're forced to get this report done in this time, and I respect the need for it, but I don't think it helps any of us if we don't recognize how many flaws will be in our report. We simply don't have the appropriate time to do the work we were tasked with. That's nothing against the analyst, who has been amazing through this process, but as we do this report, I don't think adding that little extra about how our provincial and territorial governments are making decisions is too much to ask.

• (1210)

**The Chair:** What you have just said, Ms. Blaney, seems like another study. It almost seems like we're not just adding in whether a provincial parliament has had a session or two, but in addition to that, we're also adding the whole plan that—

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** No, we don't have to add the whole plan. I don't think that's a requirement. I'm saying they have them. Making a reference that gives a link to their plan, to me, reflects that we are a national body and there are provincial and territorial bodies, and as all of us move through this, we're looking at what other countries are doing and what other provinces and territories are doing.

It's at the will of the committee. I respect that we don't have a lot of time, but I think there could be some solutions that we could talk about. That's just my perspective.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I feel we've gone down a road that is now almost going to have a whole bunch of mini-studies that would be very insightful and would be great, but let's hear from Andre. Maybe he could sort this out for us.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** If it helps the committee during this discussion, I emailed my colleague who wrote the section and said that the committee is discussing this right now. I asked if it would be possible to add a line along the discussion that the committee is having now. She wrote back to me and said she's on it, if that helps the committee.

**The Chair:** That absolutely helps the committee.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair, could I just be clear, then, about what she's on?

Andre, if you could clarify that for me, it would be appreciated.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** I asked her to add a sentence about when each province is coming back or if there's anything known about when the provincial or territorial legislatures are planning on sitting again—every province.

For additional information for Ms. Blaney and for Dr. Duncan, I would put something at the top explaining that there are of course going to be differences across the country about how COVID is affecting people in the different provinces and legislatures and that the reader might want to keep that in mind when reading about the provinces and territorial legislatures.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair, to be frank, that's precisely what we were asking for. It is to reflect the current environment. You'll have to excuse me, but I thought we were in the process of drafting a report that does reflect the current environment. There are things that have been added. For example, we talked about what's happening in the Scottish Parliament. We added the current environment in New Zealand, Scotland and Wales. Frankly, it doesn't make any sense not to add what the current environment is here in our own country when we did that for other countries half an hour ago. It's not asking for much, except to reflect the current environment.

We're in the process of drafting a report. This is what we do. We don't try to keep information away from Canadians. We try to put it in the report. That's what we're reflecting here.

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Chair, if I may—

**The Chair:** Yes, I did see your hand go up and I saw another one.

We'll go to Ms. Petitpas Taylor and then Mr. Genuis.

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I think it also would be very fair, if we're going to be adding a line with respect to that, to include a line that reflects our current national reality as well when it comes to travel. I think that really needs to be highlighted in the report as well. If we are going to add the reality of what's going on in the provincial setting, so be it, but the public health measures that have been put in place as well also have to reflect our reality as parliamentarians.

Ms. Blaney is on one coast and I'm on the other coast. My reality in New Brunswick is very different from Ms. Blaney's. We also know that there are many restrictions that provinces have put in place. My concern is with that total picture. It's not that I don't want the information to be available to Canadians. My concern is that there are parts of this picture that are really going to be missing. That's my only concern with respect to adding pieces of information. I think we have to have a total picture if we're going to start adding pieces to it.

**The Chair:** We'll hear from Garnett and then from the analyst.

• (1215)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Some of the points I was going to make are maybe a bit moot in light of the fact that there seems to be an agreement about adding some additional information. I'll leave it to the regular members to discuss specifics.

Madam Chair, I want to ask you about the process for getting recognized in the committee. Are you using the hand-raise function on the right of the screen, or are people getting your attention in another way? It seems that there might be multiple tools being used.

**The Chair:** Thanks for that, Garnett.

Generally, in every meeting other than this one, we have been using rounds so that I know who's up next to speak, or we have used the raise-hand tool in the participants' section. Today, since we have been going so quickly, people have just been catching my eye by waving their hand; hence, the rules have been a little off today. If we could go back to people putting their hands up in the participants' section, that will make it easier when more people jump in than just the one or two so far.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** All right. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Mr. Duncan, you'd like to say something?

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** I think everybody could agree on making a small change in the Newfoundland section. A smaller change would be more agreeable to Andre. It isn't the legislative assembly, but the House of Assembly in Newfoundland. We can all probably get a thumbs-up on that.

**The Chair:** Yes, we have thumbs up.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** There we go.

**The Chair:** Just like that. The point about the Victoria museum that Mr. Brassard made the last time was a good catch.

Andre, I know you mentioned travel as well in another part of the report, and that there are quarantine requirements in place in some provinces and not in others. It didn't really get into details, so seeing everyone's comments here, do you think we would be able to add in how many sittings the legislature has had, what the travel restrictions in and out of that place are, and if they have a provincial plan in place, could we link to it, as Ms. Blaney suggested? Could all of that be done?

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** The issue, I think, could be one of time. I was in touch with my colleague, and she'll probably finish work, as most people do, around four or five o'clock. I said I'll create a list of things for her to add to that section in line with whatever the committee would like added. Right now I have noted that we need to update when the provincial and territorial legislatures are sitting, and, if they are sitting, what their plan is. I can add something about travel restrictions as well. We'll see if she's able to find that information and add it to the section as well.

Is there anything else the committee would like?

**The Chair:** Okay, is that good then? Can we move on? All right.

Go ahead, Christine.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** As far as the part relating to Quebec is concerned, I want to make sure it doesn't seem contradictory. In fact, the French reads:

Aucune disposition du Règlement de l'Assemblée n'autorise les députés à participer à distance aux travaux de la Chambre et des comités.

This suggests that members are illegally participating in the work, remotely. Perhaps we should simply reword it and make it clear that there is no provision that specifically allows for this, but there is no provision that prohibits it either. Maybe we just need to word it in such a way that it doesn't seem contradictory.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We're lacking a provision for that. You have that, Andre, right?

I'm going to go back a little and name each province off and just get the thumbs-up from everybody or see if there are any other minor mistakes.

For the British Columbia section, are we good with that? Yes. Now we have Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec.

I think the point that Christine made here with regard to Quebec, Andre, could be applicable to more than just the one section. We could say there is an absence of any rules regarding remote voting or any of that. All of that could probably be phrased a bit better than the way it is right now, in the negative, where it just says that it's not allowed or something.

Now we have New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Yukon.... Obviously, as we've discussed, there are going to be some additions to all of those sections.

Now we go on to the "Discussion" section and the meatier part of our report.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

● (1220)

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I just want to clarify whether the public health information is also going to be included for each of those jurisdictions. If we're going to include and update the other aspects for each jurisdiction, can we make sure to get some public health information in there as well?

**The Chair:** Thanks for that clarification, Ryan, and thanks for bringing it up now before we move on.

I think the items that have been mentioned so far include a current, up-to-date record of their proceedings, whether they sat, any rule changes that they've made, any provisions that they had, travel restrictions and health agency updates. They're to be very brief, in a sentence each, if that's possible.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** To Ms. Blaney's point, it's a really short timeline. It's almost as though we're going to do a separate study for each jurisdiction now in the next 24 hours or the next five hours. I just want it on the record that I'm concerned about that and the validity of that information. I think it's going to be very challenging to pull that off and it puts a burden on the analysts.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

We're going to move on to the "Discussion" portion.

On "Observations and recommendations, i. Guiding Principles", we'll start with "(a) Temporary nature of procedural changes".

Are there any comments?

I'll go to my draft version.

The clerk was just reminding me to remind all of you. I'm sure you've see the letter we received from the Speaker of the House of Commons. Speaker Rota sent a letter the other day, and I just want to remind you. Have you all had a chance to take a look at that letter?

Okay. Since the parties had all submitted their recommendations prior to hearing from the Speaker and reading what he had to say in that letter, I just thought that I would give you a heads-up that you may wish to incorporate some of what he said into the recommendations, but that is up to you.

Go ahead, Christine.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I'd like an addition made to the various points, which I find rather negative in terms of the quality of the debates. I'd like to offset that by adding that Mr. Rota testified to the quality of the exchanges that have taken place. He's the only witness who has officially seen the before and after. I think that would balance out the paragraph a bit.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** You would like that added, not as a recommendation but into the procedural changes, as one of the bullet points.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Yes, exactly. I'm alluding to Mr. Rota's opening remarks, when he said, "As chair of the committee I was impressed by this experience, both from the technological standpoint and the quality of the exchange".

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay. Andre will include that quote by Mr. Rota.

That's good, Andre.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** I would only add that I would put the Speaker above the other witnesses, as the Speaker is a very important figure in our House of Commons.

**The Chair:** Yes, absolutely.

All right, seeing as there are no hands raised regarding this section, we'll move on to "(b) Employ an incremental approach to expanding the House's technological operations".

• (1225)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** In paragraph 5, line 17, it just says, "He also noted that members needed to continue make".

That should maybe be "continue to make".

**The Chair:** Yes, another "to" needs to be added.

Andre, you've got that? Okay.

That's on page 27, but for the French version, we are on section (b) still, on the second-last paragraph. No, there are more paragraphs. I'm sorry.

Are we good with this section? Can we look at the recommendations for this section now? Okay. For this section, we have recommendations from three parties.

Andre, we may need your help a little bit—or even more so—on some of this, because some of these ideas are overlapping each other, as you can see. I'm not sure, but maybe from a writing perspective you can give us some guidelines or some feedback as to how things can be changed so that they're not overlapping or redundant.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** I suppose the easiest thing to say would be that with each recommendation you could take elements that you like or don't like, or you could take the whole recommendation, and I could create a blend. Or each recommendation could be separate and distinct. It really is up to how the committee would like to proceed, but that would be one possibility.

**The Chair:** Keeping them as is, I think, is an option. I don't think it's the most stylistic option. In terms of having our report a little more presentable and cohesive, it would be good to blend, but that's just my opinion.

I was wondering if the committee has any ideas as to how that could be done, or what could be blended, if anything—

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair—

**The Chair:** —but if it's the parties' wish to keep everything completely separate, that's fine, too. We could do that.

Mr. Brassard.

**Mr. John Brassard:** I guess the challenge I have when I look at the recommendations as printed now is that they really intertwine a fully functioning virtual Parliament with an emergency session type of Parliament. I think it has to be a little more cohesive or conclusive, whatever you want to call it, where we separate the fact that, under an emergency situation, we want to make sure that perhaps there is some trigger or mechanism. We could use a pandemic as one of those situations. There could be other situations as well.

I'd like to put a wall around, for lack of a better term, what we identify in the recommendations as moving to a virtual one or the

potential of a hybrid Parliament in an emergency situation, as opposed to just simply talking about a fully functioning virtual Parliament. I just don't see that in here.

My point is that we have to come up with something that is much more understood in any one of these recommendations in order to reflect what the purpose of this study was. I go back to what it was, and that was to look at alternatives, given the type of situation that we're in right now.

I guess a little more understanding, Madam Chair, is what I'm saying.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Madam Chair, can I make a comment?

**The Chair:** Yes.

Oh, I'm sorry. Mr. Duncan had been waiting.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** My apologies.

**The Chair:** Mr. Duncan had his hand up even before Mr. Brassard spoke.

Was your hand up from before?

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** No worries. You have a tough job between the screen and the participants sitting there.

This is a newbie question. I apologize. As a new member, this is my first time going through a study like this. Are we going to go through each recommendation individually in each section? To Mr. Brassard's point, there's some higher level here of what direction we're looking at going in, and I think it's going to be important before deciding on all of these sections and recommendations.

As a new member, I'm just wondering if we're going to debate or discuss each one, or if we're going to discuss by sections, or if we're going to go through the smaller technical stuff and then go to the recommendations. I'm just looking for some clarity on my end.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Yes. Let's hear from Mr. Turnbull, and then maybe we can get into that.

Actually, you just reminded me that originally my desire was to get through just the text and then come back to the recommendations. I think that may help us speed things up a little bit, at least for the time being, until we get into the real nitty-gritty. It also gives us a little more time to reflect on the recommendations and how we can make them flow more consistently, because at the end of the report—and correct me if I'm wrong, Andre—it's not going to state whether this party or that party has made this particular recommendation. It's just going to say that the report recommends these things.

I think it's in the committee's interest as a whole to have a report that looks like it was written by the majority of the committee, rather than to have a very disjointed, repetitive set of recommendations, because the parties are not going to be identified in the final report. We're not going to know who recommended something, other than perhaps by seeing a dissenting or supplementary opinion. We will be able to differentiate by what was in those additions to the report, but other than that, the main body will only have the recommendations of the majority of the committee.

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** That's unless anybody watches this committee and knows where we all stand.

**The Chair:** You're right that it is public, but for readers of the report down the road who are looking at the report for information, I think it should be as coherent as possible.

Go ahead, Ryan, please.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Madam Chair, thank you.

I appreciated Mr. Duncan's clarification question. I think if we had started on the previous section in the recommendations.... I think we skipped into the second section, which had recommendations. From my perspective, Mr. Brassard's comment is to contain this situation to extraordinary circumstances, and really, that's what this committee is studying. We are looking at a fully functioning virtual Parliament within extraordinary circumstances. I think if we had started on the previous section, that would have been much more clear as part of many of the recommendations that were being made by many of the parties.

In terms of process, I wonder if we would just focus on the content of the sections rather than the recommendations, as you said, Madam Chair—

**The Chair:** You're absolutely correct, Ryan.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** —and then start from the beginning.

**The Chair:** You're absolutely correct. I think I was focusing on the text, and then all of a sudden the recommendations I had skipped started standing out to me more than they did. That was an error on my part.

Let's carry on. We have had a little bit of discussion, and everyone has been able to give some thought as to how they want to see the recommendations look in the end. We will carry on with “employ an incremental approach to expanding the House's technological operations.”

Is everybody okay with the text of that section? Yes.

Section (c) is headed “Uphold the rights, immunities and privileges of the House and its members”.

We're going to take a look at the text of this section at this point. Then we will come back to all the recommendations in one chunk.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** A sentence in the second paragraph begins with “Witnesses described the importance protecting.” I need “of” added.

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

Andre, did you get that? It's line 10 on page 29. Perfect.

Section (d) is “Uphold language rights”. We are just looking at the text.

• (1235)

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair, on page 29, from line 23 to page 30, we did hear evidence, and I guess it would fall into this category, from Ms. Qaqqaq's testimony that she was concerned that her privileges would be 100% in jeopardy. I think it's important too, because I asked that specific question of her. I think it would be important for that to be reflected in the report as we're addressing members' privileges.

It is not in this report, and I suggest that it should be, Madam Chair, so that the members of Parliament understand there are concerns out there for at least this individual member of Parliament.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Chair—

**The Chair:** I have Christine. Then, Mark, I'll go to you.

Could I request that we continue to have the hands go up in the “participants” part of Zoom? It will just keep the order better.

Christine, do you have a comment on the language rights section? We've backtracked right now to the rights immunity section and to privileges.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** My comment concerns parliamentary immunity and privilege. I'd like to see an addition reflecting Mr. Rota's representations relating to the question I asked, which was whether increasing the number of in-person sittings would constitute an obstruction of parliamentary privilege.

I think that this point of view is also relevant and that we should have this opposing view, since the committee's recommendations may be used in the further analysis of our return to the House on May 25. In one of his responses, Mr. Rota said that returning to sit in person more frequently could be seen as obstructing the parliamentary privilege of MPs who are older, farther away and less healthy.

[English]

**The Chair:** On the two notes, Andre, one is the quote from MP Qaqqaq about her feeling that her privileges would.... You can find the exact language that she used at that time. The other is from Speaker Rota, who was talking about continuing an in-person Parliament and how members' privileges could be impeded in that way as well. Both of those opinions add good context and add both sides of it.

Mr. Gerretsen.



**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm okay with Mr. Brassard's point about adding in what Ms. Qaqqaq had indicated, but I asked a follow-up question to that as to whether or not there had actually ever been a ruling on that. I think it's important to point out that if we're going to add that in, we should indicate that it was her opinion, and that there had never been such a ruling on parliamentary privilege there, as it related to her thoughts.

**The Chair:** I think you asked whether she raised the question of privilege herself.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** That's correct.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** I just think it should be pointed out that she had not actually raised that. It was her interpretation of it.

**The Chair:** Okay. I guess there is going to be a big section quoting the interaction back and forth a bit there.

Andre, is that possible? Okay.

Next we have Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** It's an interesting point. I don't know how there could have been a ruling, as we've never run a virtual Parliament. The point is, her concern is there.

Now that we're talking about this, just so that you all know, I am going to move, hopefully, the one recommendation that talks about making sure that every member of Parliament has adequate Internet accessibility, because this is a concern. I want to remind you that Mr. Dufresne and Mr. Bosc, as is written in this report, said that there had never been a ruling on this, so that if this were becoming become an issue of privilege, there would have to be a process that unfolded. That is the reality as we are moving into a place where the unknown is the new reality—and how interesting it will be for the Speaker to make those kinds of rulings.

• (1240)

**The Chair:** Yes, absolutely. We're all living through a time that is going to go down in history as being very memorable, especially here on Parliament Hill. Everything we engage in, even at this committee, is historic.

Mr. Gerretsen, do you still want that part included and then, in response, that there hasn't been an opportunity to raise that, or...?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Well, it could be worded in that way. I just think that when we start talking about parliamentary privilege it's an extremely serious thing, and I just want it to be clear that it had.... I totally respect and agree with Ms. Blaney's approach and, indeed, we have a very similar recommendation to that as well. I just want to make sure that it's understood that—

**The Chair:** Mark, can you put the mike a little closer to your mouth?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Yes.

When we talk about about parliamentary privilege, we're talking about something that's extremely serious. I just want to make sure that it's on the record in terms of the fact that this is an opinion, and we've had numerous opinions on parliamentary privilege.

**The Chair:** I do think Andre has done a good job of reflecting quite a few of those opinions throughout the report. This section will become even meatier with these additions.

Okay? Everybody has given good feedback and comments. I think we can move on from the privileges section.

Mr. Gerretsen and Mr. Brassard, your hands were up from before, correct?

**Mr. John Brassard:** Yes. I apologize, Madam Chair. I meant to change that after your interaction with Mr. Gerretsen, to correct what was said. That was why I was going to intervene there.

Thank you for that.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We're now on the language rights section.

Mr. Brassard, and then Mr. Richards.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair, I'm looking at page 30, lines 24 to 26, about the interpretation of indigenous languages. I'm just trying to think back; I don't believe there was any evidence before the committee about whether a third-language interpretation channel is possible with this type of technical set-up. Maybe Andre can clarify it for us, but I just don't recall that.

If it's not possible, then perhaps rather than place it in this report.... Obviously, more work will be done subsequent to this report being tabled. I suspect that we may look at getting further in depth on third languages as part of this platform that we're using. Maybe we'll make recommendations later on; I'm not sure.

I just need clarification on that, if you don't mind.

**The Chair:** Ms. Blaney has a point. Maybe we'll take that point now before the clarification.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I'm not sure, but to my understanding—I apologize if I'm wrong—this is one-way interpretation. It's from the indigenous language into English and French.

**The Chair:** Andre?

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** I am trying to think; the issue, I think, would be that you would probably [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] interpretation of indigenous languages can create some issues. You have to go from one language to another, and I'm not sure how many channels that would require.

Mr. Brassard is right; as far as I can recall, I don't remember hearing anyone saying how many channels it would take to simultaneously interpret an indigenous language into English and French. It might be something that Justin, the clerk, would be able to ask the House, about whether or not the capability does exist.

I do recall that another jurisdiction, Wales, brought up the fact that they chose Zoom because it was able to have more than one channel, but we never got into how many channels there were.

• (1245)

**The Chair:** I have heard that numerous interpretations, numerous languages, can be done on Zoom, but now I can't remember where. It may not have been through testimony before the committee. Maybe it was through just something I was researching on my own before. They're looking at using Zoom for international meetings as well, where numerous languages are being used. I can't remember whether that was in his introductory remarks, though.

I don't know, but for some reason, I'm certain that many, many languages can be interpreted. I don't know if we have the capability of having the people on hand to be able to do it all.

Does anyone recall any of that?

Mr. Brassard.

**Mr. John Brassard:** I don't know, Madam Chair, but perhaps what we can do to move through this, notwithstanding the Speaker's view on this, is to provide something in the report, whether it's another paragraph or another section, that in fact we didn't hear anything with respect to the capabilities of third-language interpretation using this technical set-up, and that perhaps this is something worth exploring in the future. That may satisfy us, moving on.

The Speaker clearly states his view, but I think we need something to reflect that in the committee's view, nothing was presented to us on this type of platform on third language, and that this is worthy of study in the future to see whether in fact it's possible.

That's my suggestion on how we move through this.

**The Chair:** Is that a recommendation that you would like to add to the report?

**Mr. John Brassard:** I don't know where it would fit in a recommendation, but what I would suggest is that we at least—

**The Chair:** It could fit right under that section, I think. Right?

You could recommend “that in further study the committee look at accommodating indigenous languages on any platform that's used”.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Okay, but I think that we should preface any recommendation with a statement in a paragraph that suggests that we did not hear of whether there is a choice for third-language interpretation. Maybe we could amend... I don't know where we could do it, but I'll leave to Andre where we could amend the fact that third-language interpretation needs to be studied going forward as part of this platform.

So, I'd like to see a preface in the “Uphold language rights” section, and then from that—

**The Chair:** A recommendation from that.

**Mr. John Brassard:** —a recommendation of a future study on this. I think that would satisfy us, finding out, or it would satisfy the Speaker's view on this, which—

**The Chair:** Maybe the recommendation can be worded... So, we would preface it with what you've just stated, and then the recommendation would state “that any further study of a virtual Parliament include looking into exploring options of more than two languages' being used”.

**Mr. John Brassard:** I think that's fair because we clearly don't have the time during this committee's proceedings to study that at this point. I think that would be a fair recommendation to make.

**The Chair:** Okay. Maybe when we come back to recommendations, you can propose that recommendation for that section, or we can kind of hold a spot for it.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Yes, and Andre can determine how that looks, but I think the preface of the recommendation in this paragraph is critical to give a context of why.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

Is everyone okay with that?

We can now move on from the languages portion.

There are a lot of recommendations for the languages portion, so that would be the additional recommendation, Andre, for the indigenous languages. I think that many previous recommendations have already indicated that there be continued study beyond what this report recommends.

Now we're on to “Ensure digital security of proceedings”.

Sorry, I missed a section: “Ensure accessibility of proceedings”.

Just put your hand up in the participants' section of Zoom if you have anything to add.

Thank you.

Christine is good with this section.

All right, we'll go on to the next—thank you, Ms. Blaney—section: “Ensure digital security of proceedings”.

Ms. Blaney, you have your hand up. Was that for the section on accessibility?

• (1250)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** No, it's for this one.

**The Chair:** The digital security of proceedings. Okay, perfect.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** That's right.

In paragraph 3, line 11, “unless proceedings need to”, we should add “be”. It should be “be held in camera” not “to held in camera”.

Then, in paragraph 7, it has, on line 21, “simultaneous interpretation capabilities, broadcasting capabilities”. Let's just maybe get rid of the first “capabilities” and then just put “and broadcasting”. It's just a thought.

**The Chair:** Andre, is that good? Okay.

Is there anything else for that section?

Okay, we're on to “Prioritize the health and safety of members and all individuals...”.

Raise your hand in the participants' section of Zoom if there are any issues. It's a short section.

Now we're moving on to "Legal and procedural matters". The first matter being discussed is quorum.

Yes, Christine.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** We already established at the outset that quorum can be virtual. There have been representations to that effect. It seems to me that it was missing in this section, because it only talks about the fact that members must be physically present. Perhaps the balance that had been achieved through the various representations should be restored.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Andre, in testimony, the different law clerks and former speakers had testified that it could be, but I guess it's just that it hasn't been done.

Maybe that is what your thinking was in terms of drafting this. Should we put in what their opinion of virtual quorum is?

It comes up in the recommendations as well, though, but just as Mr. Brassard is saying, there should be a process to that. I think the recommendation that is listed is also taken directly from something that was quoted from one of the witnesses.

Andre, are we good? Yes. You know this report better than all of us, though. I'm surprised how quickly you can keep up with all these thoughts.

Are we good for the quorum section? No, we have a couple of hands up. I'm sorry.

Ms. Blaney, and then Mr. Turnbull.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** My only point is that on page 40, line 3, there's some very tiny writing. I can't read it. I don't know what that is. Maybe it's a weird thing on mine. It looks like a line.

**The Chair:** Yes, there's a line.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** There's a line, but if you look closely, there are words. I don't know what it is, so just delete that.

**The Chair:** Yes.

Andre, do you see that on yours? There's something that showed up on all of ours. No, not yours?

Some people are nodding no, and some people are nodding yes. I don't know, but I'm sure we'll have the final version scrubbed and looking good.

Is there anything else on quorum?

Mr. Turnbull.

• (1255)

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I remember the conversation we had in our last meeting about this section on quorum.

I think the analyst, Andre, took the information from there and moved it up in the report. Looking at the edited version, I can see that it has been changed. That made sense and I think that's what the committee asked for, but the intention was that it was also reflected here. It's relevant to be in the report twice, or maybe slightly

reworded. I think that was Ms. Normandin's point as well and I appreciated that. It should be there.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're moving on in the report to "Hybrid model for sittings of the House".

**Mr. John Brassard:** Sorry, Madam Chair, I had my hand up.

**The Chair:** On the quorum part, okay, yes, you do, after Mr. Turnbull. It came up just now.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Sorry about that. I thought it was up.

Again going back to the section on quorum, from line 20, on page 39, and continuing on to page 40, Andre, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but we also heard evidence from Mr. Dufresne acknowledging that he could also be wrong with respect to quorum and that the consequences would be that any decision taken by a virtual quorum could or would be invalidated.

I know that there was evidence in that regard, so I think we may want to add the content to this particular paragraph, because it does reflect not an option but a counter to what Mr. Dufresne did say, or a caveat to what he did say, with respect to those consequences. That needs to be in the report as well.

**The Chair:** Okay, so there are no changes to line 20 because it's actually a recommendation, and we'll get back to that later, but you want both views that were stated, or the alternative view that was stated.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Right, Madam Chair, and just to be clear, that would fall under section (a), Quorum, not necessarily within the recommendations, just what Mr. Dufresne's testimony was.

Thank you, Andre.

**The Chair:** That sounds good.

We're on (b), "Hybrid model for sittings of the House".

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair, I think there are other comments.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Christine.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Yes.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, and Mr. Turnbull. We're still on "Quorum", then.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Speaking from all points of view, what I suggested to be added last time isn't what was added in the document. Mr. Pelletier had mentioned that quorum could be virtual, because it's a meeting of minds. However, Mr. Pelletier also said that, if it couldn't be virtual, the Standing Orders of the House could be amended under section 44 to make a virtual quorum constitutional and, therefore, it would stand up in court. If we want a complete picture, this is a good place to put this amendment.

So it's the reference to section 49 and section 44.

[English]

**The Chair:** Andre, I think the "Quorum" section lacks some of the discussion we heard and the varying viewpoints. It looks as if the committee wants a lot of that inserted because it is a very short section.

Andre, did you want to say something?

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** If I may just clarify this, Madam Chair, I moved a lot of that legal information to the front and now I've left a big hole behind where I had.... It should go in both places, from what I gather from the committee.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Andre, for being so accommodating.

Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I wanted to speak to Mr. Brassard's point. I think he is referring to a caveat, whereas I think the general sentiments of the testimony that I recall were very clearly in favour of the fact that the House governs with its own set of rules and procedures, and that the courts, on many occasions, have consistently employed a flexible approach that reflects the realities of modern life, consistent with that living tree interpretation of the Constitution Act.

We heard this from multiple, very reputable experts, and I'd like that reflected, because that seems to be, in my recollection, the sweeping and expert advice that was provided to this committee; it was not to say that the caveat that somebody made, based on a question, does not negate the overall dominance of that perception expressed by multiple experts on the subject matter.

• (1300)

**The Chair:** Point noted. I think the majority of the experts did lean one way, but we'll have both points reflected, and if you can balance the weight of the evidence as it was stated.

Yes. Thanks. Andre gave a thumbs up.

We're moving on from "Quorum" now. I don't see any hands up on the "participants" part of Zoom.

The next section is "Hybrid model for sittings of the House".

Yes, Mr. Brassard?

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair, it's a minor point I have, but it isn't minor to Mr. Barnhart. As he is a former lieutenant-governor, the term "Honourable" should be before his name.

Andre, just so you know, it doesn't reflect that in other parts of the report, but I believe he is entitled to that style. Thank you.

Just while I'm on that, I know another section speaks about Peter Milliken, who, as a member of the Privy Council, should have "Honourable" in front of his name as well. I think we should reflect that. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. That is protocol.

Are there any other issues with or comments on this section?

With regard to (c), "Alternate locations", everyone has a thumbs up.

Ms. Blaney, you have a comment, then Mr. Richards.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Yes. I'm wondering if it's normal practice to quote a member of the committee, as I've never seen that happen before. I'm sure Mr. Brassard really enjoys that.

**The Chair:** We'll hear from our analyst on that.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** Thanks, Madam Chair.

I put this specific quote in the report because the order of reference had three suggested things that the committee look at, and this was one of them. It was, for lack of a better term, the only testimony that was really given on alternate locations, and it came from Mr. Brassard.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** That's fantastic. I'm wondering if we could at least have something in there, in that section, that recognizes the reality that this was not something the committee spent a lot of time studying, unfortunately. I think it's important to have that on the record.

**The Chair:** Mr. Richard's hand was up first, and then Christine.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Yes, on this point, it wasn't something we discussed a lot, and I have no problem with reflecting that. However, we were looking at the comparatives from the provincial legislatures and whatnot, and there are a number of places that are at least looking at alternative venues. For example, it's being discussed in New Brunswick. There's been some consideration given to it in Prince Edward Island, and the motions adopted in both Manitoba and British Columbia authorized alternative venues.

We could also add a paragraph that notes the possibility that MLAs.... New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are looking at potentially seating MLAs in galleries. We could add those points to give some context around the idea of alternate locations and what's being considered in provincial legislatures, so that we can give a bit more expression to what we were actually directed to look at.

Even though time was very short and we didn't get to those things as much as we would have liked, there are ways we can work that into the report as we were directed to do.

• (1305)

**The Chair:** Yes, time was short, and that's why we're heading down this rabbit hole where we've allowed injecting things into the report that we actually didn't hear because we didn't have time.

Do you want that added—

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I don't think a report is—

**The Chair:** No, that's fine. I'm not saying we shouldn't.

Should we add it in the "Alternate locations" section, or in the provincial section?

**Mr. Blake Richards:** It could be added in both, but obviously it should be added here, for sure. A report doesn't require that we look only at the testimony we heard. We can look at all the evidence that's available to us and the facts that are available to us, and this is one of those facts.

Given that this was one of the things we were directed to look at, we should try our best to include something on it. I think it should be in this section. If we want to include it in the provincial section as well, in addition to that, that's fine with me. Certainly we should include it here, so that we can provide a little bit of meat to something that we were given direction to look at.

**The Chair:** Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I just want to express the concerns I have about this being in the report. I don't think it's appropriate. All of us have made recommendations throughout many of the proceedings of this committee, none of which are reflected in this report or quoted and referenced with our names attached to them. I just think that's inappropriate.

I would also say that I thought the way committees functioned was to receive testimony from expert witnesses. Is Mr. Brassard an expert witness on venues in Ottawa for other locations? I don't see how this is actually expert opinion. I think it's one committee member's opinion, and it seems inappropriate—no disrespect to Mr. Brassard. I appreciate the comments and the suggestions, even though I don't agree that these were good suggestions. I just don't think that it's appropriate to have this in there, given the fact that we haven't given voice to the many other, I think, substantial recommendations that other members have made. If we did so, I think this report would probably go on for hundreds of pages.

**The Chair:** Christine, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I don't want to take away your quote, Mr. Brassard, but if we're looking for a quote that deals with the change in location, perhaps we could use Dr. Raymond's quote, which is currently in the "Canada's seat of Parliament" section. It could be put in place of the existing one.

This recommendation states that before changing locations, an audit should be conducted and the location should be checked to ensure that it is safe. This would then be linked to our recommendations on validating another location. We would then have expert testimony on a different location where Parliament could sit.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** That was from the doctor who testified.

Andre, could that be added in? That was the only testimony we had on alternate locations.

Next up we have Mr. Brassard and then Mr. Gerretsen—or, Mr. Brassard, I think you already made your point. I think it's Mr. Gerretsen—

**Mr. John Brassard:** No.

**The Chair:** Oh, you put your hand back up?

**Mr. John Brassard:** Yes, I did, Madam Chair.

First of all, Andre or Justin, correct me if I'm wrong, but was it not the mandate of this committee, as part of the motion or through some other reference somewhere, that we were to look at the possibility of using locations other than the House of Commons to hold our meetings? I'm getting a thumbs-up from Justin.

In the context of our study, then, I thought I made.... First of all, my kids are going to be disappointed if my name is struck from this report, because I told them that I would be in a PROC report for the history of Canada.

We were obligated to look at alternative locations as part of this study, so I'm bringing it up. I think we should reflect in the report that when I asked Mr. Patrice whether we could use TD Place, the Canadian Tire Centre or the Shaw Centre as an alternative location, he said that was "quite interesting" as a possibility.

I think what is in part of this section accurately reflects the discussion that went on, including Dr. Raymond's comments. I suggest, and may make this point a bit later when we look at the recommendations, that despite the fact that the Public Health Agency of Canada provides the guidelines and mandates, we made it very clear in the line of questioning with Dr. Raymond and House administration that we were doing a good job of following those guidelines during the committee sessions that were occurring in the House of Commons, that social distancing was being adhered to, etc. Ultimately, it's up to Parliament, with the help of House administration, to figure out whether we should look at these alternative locations.

It may not suit the narrative of not wanting to sit in Parliament, but I think it accurately reflects the mandate that we were given to look at alternative locations. If it's the will of the committee not to look at these, that's fine, but the fact that we had this testimony and had this discussion needs to be reflected in this report, in addition to Mr. Patrice's comment that the concept of looking at an alternative location is "quite interesting".

That's all I have to say about that. Any suggestion to strike this out of the report basically whitewashes what was discussed and what we were mandated to look at, and this was one of those things.

Thank you.

• (1310)

**The Chair:** Okay, yes. In the order of reference we were asked to look at the issue of alternatives.

Mr. Gerretsen and then Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I understand that the order of reference has dictated that we look at this, and perhaps we failed in that responsibility. We'll let those who read this report be the judge of that.

However, my concern is that.... This is with all due respect to Mr. Brassard. I would say this to anybody.

I'm fairly new. I've only been around since 2015. In the three standing committees of Parliament that I've been on, we've never accepted a member's comments as testimony. If we do, then I have some questions for Mr. Brassard as a witness. Does he think that the costs would be justified? How much would it cost to do something like this? Does he think that's a good use of taxpayer dollars? I have questions that I would like to ask, if that's going to be allowed.

If this is a matter of addressing the fact that we missed a spot in the order of reference, I would be more open to the idea of a wording that said something like “other than one instance when it was brought up by a member of the committee, we didn't have any further discussions on it”, something to that effect.

As Mr. Turnbull said, there are a number of different comments or recommendations. I made a specific recommendation, as did many people throughout the meetings, that could just as easily be turned into a two-sentence paragraph like this one and added into the report.

I do share the concerns that have been expressed by other members on the committee, and I don't think we should be using this particular sentence to illustrate the fact that we have gone down the road of looking at this, as it was, at best, an ad hoc comment that made it into the report.

**The Chair:** I think Andre tried to do the best job, when given this heading and in wanting to include something, since there wasn't much to pick from. It was unfortunate that it was all we had, other than what Dr. Raymond said.

Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I agree with Mr. Gerretsen. I have numerous objections and questions on alternate locations that we never got to discuss with Mr. Brassard.

I agree completely that if that comment were to be allowed in there, there should also be numerous other comments. I think we did talk about the seat of Parliament. We did talk about constituency offices serving as alternate locations for members that would be included in a virtual Parliament or in any virtual proceedings. Therefore, there is a sense in which we did look at some alternate location, or aspects of that.

I really don't feel that having one member's thoughts and opinions about this really adequately.... Like, it just seems inappropriate. I would ask the clerk for clarification, if possible, on whether this is normally done.

I think during testimony, to Mr. Gerretsen's point, we as a committee all get access to ask witnesses questions so that the evidence that's reflected in these reports really reflects the robust conversation we've been able to have with each one of those witnesses. We did not get a chance to do that with Mr. Brassard. If he's an expert witness, I would like to ask for more time to have him come before the committee so we can ask him questions.

• (1315)

**The Chair:** There's unfortunately no more time, but I see what you're saying.

Three of the Conservatives wish to speak to this.... I feel as though we are going in circles and are going to spend a lot of time on this. I'm hoping we can come to some kind of resolution.

It seems like everyone is going to jump to make sure that Mr. Brassard's children are not disappointed at the end of this. If you are going to be repeating what you've already said, then I would just ask you to please refrain from doing so. Then we'll hear from Andre and try to come to some conclusion on this matter.

Yes, Mr. Gerretsen.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** On a point of order, Madam Chair, I believe Mr. Turnbull asked a question of the clerk. Will we get to hear the answer to that?

**The Chair:** Yes.

On whether it's customary, Andre, do you want to answer that now or do you want to hear all the questions?

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** It appeared that Justin had something to say on that. I will defer to him.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's probably more appropriate.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Justin Vaive):** To Mr. Turnbull's question, it is ultimately the committee's report. Whatever you want to include in your report is perfectly fine. Ultimately, the committee needs to decide whether or not you would like that reference to appear in the report. You can also change it, if you want. You can decide to remove it, if you want.

There is no hard and fast rule, per se, that would necessarily prevent the type of reference that is currently in the draft report from remaining, if that's what the committee wants. If it's the decision of the committee to not have it in, it is entirely up to the committee to make that determination.

**The Chair:** Next up are Mr. Genuis, Mr. Richards and Mr. Brassard.

We're at 1:17 p.m. and we have many pages to get through. It looks as though we'll be going into another sitting. I obviously want a good product, and I'm not trying to say let's produce a bad product in terms of saving time, but I'm sure no one wants to sit for another three hours going in circles on these issues. Hopefully, we can resolve this.

Mr. Genuis.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's interesting that you spoke about talking for three hours before I spoke. I can assure you that I'll be as brief as I normally am.

My concern, actually, is that we didn't have Mr. Brassard's full title before his name. I thought we should have added “the honourable” in this section.

In all seriousness, look, I understand that the Liberal members don't like having the names of people in reports. Maybe that explains why they didn't want to do a study of the Trudeau report at the ethics committee.

But you know, I guess the core point here is that—

**The Chair:** Come to your point, Garnett.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Yes, and I know members don't want to have that revisited—well, some members anyway.

The issue here is that there seems to be an implied argument by some members that there's a hierarchy of testimony between testimony given in opening remarks and testimony given in response to questions. Mr. Brassard asked a witness a question, and the witness discussed their view on that question in response to that question. If people have objections to the naming of members, it could just be emphasized that this specific issue was discussed, options were raised and the perspective was given by the witness.

I don't think this really turns on the issue of naming a member. That seems, in all seriousness, like a bit of a sideshow. The point is that a question was asked and some discussion was had. Yes, it was during questions and answers, not during opening remarks, but there's no hierarchy of testimony. It's the right of members to ask questions of witnesses that reflect the things they want to hear answered, and those responses constitute part of the testimony.

Maybe a way forward on this, Madam Chair, is simply to have the analyst come back with a more expansive explanation of what the witness said—the fact that these were ideas raised and that the witness responded saying, yes, those were ideas that had merit and potential. If the name were replaced with “a member raised this”.... It's fairly common that the things witnesses say in response to questions and the context in which those things are said are raised.

Let's not get hung up on a name. I think if the analyst can come back with that kind of more detailed, more expansive explanation of what was asked and what the response was, I hope that would satisfy everyone.

Thanks.

• (1320)

**The Chair:** Mr. Richards.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** As a similar point to Mr. Genuis's, I think I maybe have a specific suggestion, because I, too, don't think—and I'm sorry to disappoint your children, John—that it makes a lot of sense to name a specific member of the committee and what they said. I think there's a better way we could introduce this, because there was a witness who was asked about this and made a comment on it. I think that would satisfy the concerns I heard from Mr. Turnbull and Mr. Gerretsen to some degree as well. That would be something we heard from a witness, and everyone had an opportunity to question the witness on it, and in this case, that is in fact what did happen with Michel Patrice. I forget his title, but the analyst would have that. We could just indicate “House administration official”, whatever his actual title is, “Michel Patrice”....

What we would do is just replace everything in that paragraph before “considering”. We would just indicate instead, “[His title] Michel Patrice described as quite interesting the idea of”, and then carry on with “considering”, etc. from there.

I think if we do that in conjunction with what I suggested earlier, where we indicate some of the things that were done in the other provinces, it satisfies the concerns we were hearing from other members but still allows us to delve into a topic we were directed to study, and in a way that is in line with what members, in the discussion we just had, indicated they'd like to see.

I think it should satisfy everybody.

**The Chair:** Okay, I think we're getting somewhere.

We'll go to Mr. Gerretsen, and then Mr. Alghabra. Then hopefully that's it, and we can move on.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Sorry, Madam Chair. I don't need to speak.

**The Chair:** Thank you. That's appreciated. It will save us all time.

Mr. Alghabra, what are some compromises or solutions you came up with?

**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.):** Following these points, I'd like to propose, Madam Chair, that perhaps we could explicitly say that the committee did not spend a lot of time examining alternative locations, and that in one of the conversations, a member of the committee asked one of the witnesses...and then quote the witness. I think we could leave it there.

**The Chair:** Is everybody okay with that? I think it takes into consideration what everyone has pretty much said.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Excuse me, Madam Chair. Just to clarify, is the suggestion then that the suggestions I made about indicating what we're aware of in terms of other provinces be left out?

**The Chair:** No, that was separate. I think this is just the issue of Mr. Brassard's comment in that second paragraph.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** In that case, I would argue that the suggestion I made satisfies exactly what Mr. Alghabra just suggested.

**The Chair:** Yes. I think you both have come to somewhat of an agreement there, and that's what we can leave it at, thank God. Thank you.

Andre, you have that? Okay. Obviously, there are the previous points that Christine and Mr. Richards also made. I think those were the main points that were made in the quorum section, unless somebody wants to remind me if I missed something.

Is that what you have, Andre? Yes, okay.

All right, so we are on “Order and decorum”.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** On a point of order, Madam Chair, I'm just handing the floor over to Corey now.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

• (1325)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I'm sure you'll miss me.

**The Chair:** It's nice to have you back, Mr. Tochor.

**Mr. Corey Tochor:** This is way better than QP, and there are way better answers, by the way.

**The Chair:** Okay, we are on the “Order and decorum” section. In the English version, that's pages 42 to 44, Mr. Tochor.

It's a short section. Are there any comments on that? I'll look for a raised hand in the participants section.

Mr. Brassard.

I'm breaking my own rules. I keep calling on you guys when I see your hands.

Is everyone good with this section? Perfect.

On the next section, “Voting”, Ms. Blaney, are you raising your hand?

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I'm raising my hand.

In paragraph 2, the second line, line 14 on page 45, it says “likely requires amending”. I think “amendments” makes more sense than “amending to sections 48 and 49”. It should be “likely requires amendments to sections”.

**The Chair:** Andre, did you get that? All right.

“Voting” is good. I don't see any other hands raised.

On “Question Period”—

**Mr. John Brassard:** Sorry, Madam Chair, I just raised my hand.

This would continue from page 44, line 26 to page 46. One of the things we heard from Ms. de Clercy's testimony, and it's a pretty compelling quote, is that “One of the challenges in the move to virtual assembly is to ensure that e-deliberation is more than just an episodic, half-hearted online opinion poll.” I thought that was a pretty compelling quote that I'd like to see inserted somewhere in that section between lines 26 on page 44 and line 6 on page 46.

**The Chair:** Okay. I would hope that stands for everything, even our regular in-person debates in the House as well.

**Mr. John Brassard:** That's why I thought it was compelling and that it needed to be inserted in this report, because it was probably one of the lines of the studies that we heard.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Everyone is okay with that section.

I had to hold back my opinions on some of the debate I've heard in person at times in the House. Anyway, at times it's very enlightening and at other times, not so much.

Okay. “Voting” is good.

We're on to “Question Period”.

Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** In the second paragraph at line 20—on the good copy, not the tracked changes one—“in person” is in that line. It's line 20 on page 46. It should have a hyphen between “in” and “person”.

**The Chair:** Andre said that he would add that in.

Are there any other comments on “Question Period”? It's a small section.

The Bloc is good. The Liberals are okay.

Seeing as there are no hands raised, I'll move on to “B. Future work for the Committee on developing of procedures and practices”.

Mr. Brassard.

• (1330)

**Mr. John Brassard:** Thank you.

With regard to page 47, there is again another compelling line that I thought Dr. de Clercy came up with that I think needs to be included, and that is her evidence about avoiding a period of crisis becoming an accidental gateway to a permanent method of virtual assembly. Again, I think it speaks to the fact that we're looking at this in the context of an emergency trigger or an emergency situation, where we would move to a virtual assembly. I thought that this line was very compelling as well, so if we could include her comments somewhere in this section, I would appreciate that as well, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Is everyone good with that? Are there any other additions to this section, “Future work for the Committee”?

Seeing as there are no hands up, we will move on to the next section.

Sorry. We're at the end, so we have half an hour to go through the recommendations.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Madam Chair, it's taken us two and a half hours to get to this point. I think we're at a point right now where we need to start talking about what Mr. Richards brought up at the beginning of our meeting. I'm hopeful, but I don't see our getting through the recommendations within the time allotted to us, which is now 28 minutes.

Can we talk about the dissenting report, translation and the ability to table the report by Friday? I think it's an important time to have this conversation.

**The Chair:** That's not a bad idea, but I think we can make it quick. From what you have submitted so far, it looks like there are two recommendations from the Conservatives, 15 or more from the Liberals, and a similar number from the NDP and the Bloc as well.

A lot of the recommendations—I've been looking through them and the different sections—are lining up. Some need some discussion, I'm sure. What I'm trying to say is that maybe I can pose the question to the different parties as to whether you envision many changes to be made to this recommendations portion, because if you don't envision hardly any changes or you're just amalgamating certain recommendations, then essentially this version of the report doesn't change at all, even if we do go into having to sit for one or two additional hours tomorrow. I don't see how it really changes the essence of this report or the recommendations that the parties have put forward.

Is there any discussion on that?

Mr. Richards, you have a discussion point on that.

Ms. Blaney, it seems like you might want to say something. Do you envision perhaps adding more recommendations or that the report will look a lot different between today and tomorrow?

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** From what I understand, from what Mr. Richards and now what Mr. Brassard is saying, it's really about our ability to do our reports and the timeline for that, so I do feel that needs to be answered today, because it will have a bearing.



There are some recommendations that I have some serious concerns about. Until I know the debate and the discussion that happens in this committee, it's hard to say for me what the final report, for me, will look like.

It's a timeline issue and it's an important one also for my team.

• (1335)

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

We'll go to Mr. Richards, and then Madame Normandin.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** My thoughts are very similar to Ms. Blaney's on this topic. It's unrealistic to imagine that in the next 25 minutes we will go through this volume of recommendations. There is certainly going to be some discussion, and without a doubt, there will be some suggestion of changes. What that will look like we won't know until we get into the discussion, but I cannot imagine that we would not require a meeting tomorrow.

Therefore, like Ms. Blaney, I feel that until we see what those discussions look like and see where things land in the end, it is very hard to settle on a final version of a draft report. It's entirely unrealistic to expect the opposition parties—or given the minority situation we're in, I suppose potentially the government could provide a dissenting report as well—to draft a report when we don't know what the discussions will look like, we don't know what the final recommendations will be and we won't know that until tomorrow afternoon.

I don't think it's realistic to expect us to have that in by the end of the day. Potentially, we could still be meeting at that point.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I really do think there needs to be some extra time provided. Certainly at the very minimum, I would suggest possibly the end of the next day would be better.

I just really don't see how we don't provide extra time. It would be very unfair and unrealistic to expect that.

**The Chair:** Okay, and you've put forward a proposal.

We'll hear from Madame Normandin, and then the clerk can let us know how much leeway he thinks we have in terms of interpretation and being able to prepare the final version.

Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I just want to give you a heads-up on where we stand.

If all the recommendations we've made end up in the final document, we won't need a supplementary report. However, if some of them are different from the ones in the package, I may make a supplementary report, but it won't be much.

I just wanted you to know where we stand. For us, it will mainly revolve around the translation and language rights, to ensure that everything is covered.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you for letting us know that.

Justin, how much leeway do we have in terms of being able to produce for the end of day on the 15th?

**The Clerk:** I guess there are a couple of points. On the first specific point that Mr. Richards raised with respect to the dissenting opinions and the deadline, I did check back with parliamentary publications and they indicated, for additional leeway, until Thursday, May 14, at noon, in terms of some additional time, especially seeing as the committee might need to meet tomorrow afternoon as well. That's what they came back to me with in terms of additional time to have dissenting opinions put in.

On the broader issue of the other type of production milestones that would need to fall into place in order to be able to have the report presented by Friday, in reality, the best answer I can give is that it depends how much additional material or additional work the committee ultimately chooses to make to the draft that they saw today. More work required in order to make the modifications to the draft report will obviously take more translation time, as well as additional production time from parliamentary publications.

**The Chair:** All right, that's the additional time provided.

Mr. Richards.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** That is still a fairly tight timeline, and I respect that we're dealing with what we're dealing with. There are other ways we could get around that as a committee. Certainly there could be an interim report provided that says we need an extra few days.

There are ways around it. However, if [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] in that time, what I might suggest is, could we allow the parties to have until noon on Thursday to provide their copy in at least one language and follow that by the end of the day with the [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] version? Otherwise, we're—

• (1340)

**The Chair:** I couldn't hear the second half of what you just said.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Give parties at least until noon on Thursday to provide it in one language. Then our translated version could follow by the end of the day. That way at least whoever is working on the production would have some sense of the length and content. That would allow them to get started on that.

That would give us a bit more leeway. If you're expecting it to be translated by noon, that doesn't give us a lot of time to [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] the report and do that as well. Whereas if we have an extra day to provide that second language....

**The Chair:** Maybe we can hear from Ms. Blaney quickly before the clerk answers, because there might be something new raised.

Ms. Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I have nothing new to raise. It's just really understanding that the translation of the document is the biggest barrier for us as well.

**The Clerk:** I've been going back and forth with parliamentary publications. I think ideally if they got something in both languages by midday on the 14th, that would help them out as much as possible. However, if we said the end of the day on Thursday, they indicated that should also be workable.

Whatever you're able to get in, if it's in the one language by, say, noon, and then follow that up a few hours later with the translated version by 5 p.m. on May 14, parliamentary publications seem to indicate to me that is feasible for them, on the issue of the dissenting opinions.

**The Chair:** This answer should solve the problem. I understand we're on a tight deadline, but it gives you that extra day, given that we're having that one extra meeting. You're essentially in the same spot you would have been in, had you had to submit it tomorrow.

Does that resolve the issue?

I'm going to have one sidebar before we move forward with the recommendations.

Andre, I have a question for you. We were chatting about the fact that there have been a lot of additions to the text of this report as it stands. How long would you require to get that done? Then I guess the committee members need to decide, if it's not all completed and translated for us to view tomorrow, whether they are comfortable with leaving it in your hands, trusting you will reflect our comments and feedback here today accurately.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** I will certainly get the changes done in English before I go to sleep, which may end up being later than I thought I would be going to sleep. However, I think having the translation come back by 3 p.m. would be unlikely, although they have been very quick so it is possible.

**The Chair:** It's possible.

**Mr. Andre Barnes:** I can see there being about two pages of additional material, so if we're meeting at 3 p.m., it is possible. I couldn't possibly speak for translation on that, but I will do my half of that work as fast as I can.

**The Chair:** All right. I guess we're going to have to keep our fingers crossed. In the past, having worked with you in the previous Parliament, you really have never let us down. Your corrections and your additions usually always reflect what the members had intended. I have a lot of faith in your being able to do that accurately and our not having many corrections to make.

I think we should use all of our time. The questions have been answered. The dissenting or supplementary opinions have to be in by 12 p.m. in one language, and then by the end of business day at 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 14, in the translated version.

Mr. Richards.

• (1345)

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Madam Chair, I understood our clerk's comments slightly differently.

**The Chair:** You can have them both in by 5 p.m., if that makes it better.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I took it he was saying that, ideally, we would get in our first version in one language by noon. I can com-

mit that we will certainly endeavour to do that, and if it's one o'clock, we'll do it then. Whenever we have one language, we'll get it to you, whether it's before noon or... What I thought I heard was that if we do it by five o'clock, we would be okay. However, I don't see any issue with getting it in earlier than five o'clock in at least one language.

That was my—

**The Chair:** No, it needs to be translated into French and English by 5 p.m. on the 14th.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I understood that. My understanding was that it was more of a preference that the first language be received by noon if possible, not that it was absolutely critical.

Again, I don't anticipate it taking until five o'clock to get the first language, but if it were to go past noon to one o'clock or something, from the comments I heard, I didn't take that—

**The Chair:** Yes, I think there is leeway there in terms of when you submit your first language, but we need both translated versions by five o'clock on the 14th.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** That's understood. I got that. That's how I took it as well.

**The Chair:** Justin, do you have anything to add to that?

**The Clerk:** I'd simply echo what you said: by 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 14, in both official languages.

**The Chair:** There is leeway for the first language, whenever you could get that in, but I'm assuming it would be quite early, because you would need to give the translators time to translate it and have it ready for five o'clock.

Thanks to everyone on the committee for resolving that.

We are going to jump to the first section of the recommendations. I'm hoping we can get through one or two sections of the recommendations. This is after the discussion section. Raise your hand if you have any ideas.

The first recommendation is LIB 1:

We should establish an alternative set of Standing Orders to be used in extraordinary circumstances to enable a fully functioning virtual Parliament.

There is a note that says, "this recommendation was slotted by the analyst in two possible places in the report".

Recommendation BQ 10 is similar to that, in a way:

That the House permanently amend its Standing Orders to include a section authorizing the implementation of a virtual parliament....

There is a slight difference, I guess. The rest of it is pretty much the same.

NDP 2 is similar as well. NDP 2, BQ 10 and LIB 1 are all trying to get at the same idea.

Mr. Richards, do you have a proposal? You have your hand up.

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

**Mr. Blake Richards:** The indication I just received is that, because there are three that have some similarities, we'll discuss them as a bit of a group. I think that does make some sense because obviously I don't think you want to adopt three recommendations that are similar in what they're stating, so I don't disagree.

My comments on all three would be similar, other than on NDP 2. I would maybe have a suggestion on a portion of it that we can work with.

My feeling on all three is that we're taking this past what our expectation was as a committee and what our mandate was as a committee, to some degree, with those recommendations. What we were mandated to do was to look at this current situation and in what way we might proceed with sittings during the current situation, so I think these recommendations certainly go far beyond that. I'm not necessarily suggesting that we wouldn't want to look at that at some point as a committee, but I don't think this report is the spot for that.

The spot for that would be if the committee were to choose to look at recommendations going forward for future circumstances like this, and what we might do. I don't think that's where we are right now. I think if we wanted to go there, what we should be doing is looking at that outside of the context of the current situation when we've had a chance to reflect upon how this situation played out, the actions we took, the methods we used, and then bring forward suggestions on what might be done for future circumstances.

It's generally not typical that during the middle of a crisis, you say, "Here's what we would do in the next crisis." You look at dealing with the crisis, and then after the crisis is done, you review what occurred and figure out what you would do differently or the same or change about it for the next circumstance.

I would suggest these three fit more in that category, and I would not be supportive.

I would say, however, when it comes to NDP 2, I think there is a portion of that which is useful. I would pull out the part about emergency situations and the part that indicates that modified Standing Orders should only come into force at the agreement of all recognized parties. I would be supportive of that specific portion of it being a recommendation.

Those are my comments on the three, and a suggestion on NDP 2. I look forward to discussion from others.

• (1350)

**The Chair:** Seeing that all the recommendations in the whole report are before the committee and every member's feedback is valuable, what I would suggest though is that—and this is just from experience—if you don't fathom that you're going to vote for that recommendation in any way imaginable.... I would just hope that this is a good-faith effort, that we're going to try to get to where we hopefully can have consensus on a recommendation. If we adopt things that are agreeable to everyone, then hopefully I will be able to see that we'll all be in agreement, for example, if we spend a long time on something and then vote, we'll vote in favour of it as well. If not, then it ends up that you spent a lot of time on some-

thing that you knew from the get-go you were never going to be agreeable to.

I'm just requesting that every member put a good-faith effort forward in making their suggestions for these revisions, so that they're making them in order to be able to vote in favour of them, if that's understandable.

Yes, Mr. Richards.

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

I'm not certain if that was directed at me, because I was the only one who made any comments at this point. I'm not sure where your questioning of my motives comes from. I was simply indicating my thoughts on the recommendations. I don't believe that someone disagreeing with a recommendation is something that should be silenced. I was giving my opinion, and I expressed why I had that opinion, and actually offered a constructive suggestion on how we could utilize one portion of the recommendations.

I hope that wasn't your intention, to silence a member's opinion. It's a legitimate part of the process that we're going through, and it's important to express why.

**The Chair:** I think it was constructive, but as I'm seeing hands go up, I'm just trying to figure out how we're going to get through this. Ideally, we should maybe have a brief time for suggestions in order to improve some of the recommendations, but ultimately get to a vote on each recommendation in order to move through them. Given my experience as a member of this committee and other committees, I'm just hoping that all members are going to put forward good-faith efforts to improve recommendations so that they're in the state they would like to see them in so they can adopt them. I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I think all members should be doing that.

Mr. Richards.

• (1355)

**Mr. Blake Richards:** On that point of order, nobody here is suggesting that we wouldn't try to get through the report, but frankly, to suggest that MPs have no right to disagree with a recommendation and that they should seek only to adopt them, I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but that's quite an unacceptable comment for a chair to make. I hope that you will reflect upon that.

**The Chair:** I will, but I've had some experience and I'm speaking from that experience. I'm wanting to make some suggestions off the cuff before we enter into this process to everybody with regard to the recommendations, because I think this is the part where we're all going to have to do some brainstorming and some negotiations.

I give guidelines, oftentimes, before we begin any meeting. At every single meeting I have given some guidelines before we have turned to a different phase of the process. This process is going to be a little different from the process we've been going through so far in terms of going through the text of the report. I'm going to continue to hear from everybody on this issue. Eventually, when I've heard one point of.... I don't want the points of view to be repeated either. I think at that point, I will just call the vote on the recommendation and that's how we'll be able to effectively get through them.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Madam Chair, my point is that this is what I see as being democratic. Nobody here is trying to hold anything up, and I think for you to suggest that people don't have a right to express their opinions is not a very good start. I certainly hope that—

**The Chair:** I'm saying I'm going to hear from everyone until the point of repetition. That is what I'm saying.

Next we will hear from Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Madam Chair, I think that some consensus in the three proposals to have two parallel sets of procedural rules.

However, if we're going to vote on the NDP's proposal, I'd like it to be split, because it seems to contain two ideas: there is the adoption of a block of procedures and there is the enforcement mechanism to trigger the emergency procedure, which makes me a little uncomfortable. I have the impression that each party would have a veto. Either we'll never be able to use the second set of rules, or we'll never be able to get rid of it, because it would be enough for one party to decide to maintain the virtual Parliament. So, if we were to vote on this proposal, I would like it to be split into two parts.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Blaney, I think that's in reference to NDP 2.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I don't have an opinion on whether or not it should be split, because I don't think we've come to a core motion. I have concerns about splitting it. For me, the whole factor in this is that right now, as we have moved through COVID-19, we have had a lot of party collaboration and I think, regardless of whether we're in a majority or minority Parliament, making sure that all parties have a voice is really important. My concern would be that if we took it out of this recommendation we would lose that.

The other thing I want to say, given some of the comments made earlier, is that none of these recommendations, in my opinion, identifies what the Standing Orders should be. It is just setting up something specifically to address this type of issue. I think that is, in fact, part of the reason we were sent to do this work, to create a bit of a framework for us to move forward.

That's all I have to add right now.

**The Chair:** Those are good points.

Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I just wanted to make some constructive comments.

It seems to me that the Liberal, Bloc and two NDP recommendations are quite compatible. In particular, LIB 1, BQ 10 and NDP 2 are almost identical. There are some slight differences of course, and NDP 1, in my mind, speaks to the process for creating a list and presenting a list of areas of the Standing Orders that could be or need to be modified in a situation like the one we're in. I think that's a good addition, and it seems like it could almost be rolled into one recommendation, with a sub-point about process.

The other thing I would say is that, from my perspective, the Conservatives' recommendation, although it seems to be more limited in scope in terms of only applying to standing committees, still could be couched within a broader recommendation that represents—or looks like it anyway—the majority of the committee members.

To say something more specific about standing committees and having them be able to exercise all of their ordinary powers is still a very good recommendation that I would certainly support. I think it's just that the will of the committee is a bit broader and is pointing to the fact that we should have an alternative set of Standing Orders in these times of extraordinary circumstances.

● (1400)

**Mr. John Brassard:** I agree with Mr. Turnbull in the sense that, in the scope or context of what we're dealing with under the current crisis, in any of the recommendations that we put forward, that should be the context by which we discuss this. If there are, for example, changes to the Standing Orders that need to be looked at in the event of any future circumstance, then we can do that at a later time. We don't have to make those recommendations now as to those Standing Orders.

The other thing I frankly have a concern about is some of the recommendations that I'm looking at. Take for example LIB 1. If you look at an alternative set of Standing Orders to be used in extraordinary circumstances, I think we've heard clearly throughout the course of this study that we are currently in an extraordinary circumstance, but what would trigger a movement to a virtual Parliament or a hybrid Parliament—whatever you want to call it—at a later date? Who defines that? Who determines what that extraordinary circumstance might be?

Some of these recommendations are very broad in nature, and I don't know whether we want to get them to be more specific. These are the concerns that I have.

We're going to make a recommendation for when we're under extraordinary circumstances, but what constitutes an extraordinary circumstance? We know that this current crisis does. Does a flood? Does a famine? Does a war? Even in the scope of what we're discussing right now, I think perhaps this is another example of what could be pushed out to a later date or a later study, to find out what those triggers and mechanisms are because of the evidence that we heard.

**The Chair:** I think that's a really good point, Mr. Brassard, about what triggers this mechanism. I think that is addressed in one of the other recommendations made by one of the parties, but it's a point well taken.

Looking at the clock, since it is 2:03 p.m., and since this committee room and our support staff need to be helping another committee at this time, we don't have a lot of time. However, I will sit down and, maybe with the assistance of the clerk as well, try to group "like with like together" a little bit better for the next sitting tomorrow, and maybe even try to have some wordsmithing done. If all of the members of the committee can do the same, if you can work with each other, work across party lines—of course, that is ideal—and try to come up with some compromises or to make improvements to these recommendations, that would be welcome as well.

We're going to meet tomorrow at three o'clock, so we have some time to do that. I think it's actually a good idea that we have this extra time now so that we arrive at good recommendations and a concise report at the end.

Mr. Duncan, you had your hand up. Do you still want to make a comment, or do you want to save it for tomorrow?

**Mr. Eric Duncan:** I can save it for tomorrow.

I was going to try to summarize and get common ground, but we'll continue that discussion tomorrow, I'm sure.

**The Chair:** Yes, absolutely.

I'll try to group all of that together. I'll try to assist the committee a little more, and then you can also take a look from that point of view.

We will meet back virtually tomorrow at 3 p.m., and hopefully we'll have a final report at that point.

Thanks for all of your assistance and all of your participation.

The meeting is adjourned.

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