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Chair: Ms. Iqra Khalid



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• (1110)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Marc-Olivier Girard): Honourable members of the committee, I can now see a quorum.

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. As you know, the clerk cannot receive any other types of motions, nor can he entertain points of order or participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. As you know, pursuant to the Standing Orders, the chair must be a member of the governing party.

I am now ready to receive motions for the chair position.

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Clerk, I'm glad to be back and to see everybody here. I'm looking forward to picking up where we left off earlier in the year.

In that spirit, I would like to nominate Iqra Khalid, who can continue leading us as she did previously.

[Translation]

The Clerk: Mr. Maloney has nominated Ms. Khalid for chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Ms. Khalid duly elected chair of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Congratulations, Ms. Khalid.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): I also congratulate you, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Clerk: Before asking the newly elected chair to take the chair and proceed with her welcoming speech, I would like to ask the permission of the committee to proceed with the election of the first vice-chair and the second vice-chair.

According to the Standing Orders, the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition. I am now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): I would like to nominate Rob Moore.

[Translation]

The Clerk: Mr. Cooper has nominated Mr. Moore for first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

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

Congratulations, Mr. Moore.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): I would like to move a motion for the election of the second vice-chair.

[English]

The Clerk: Okay, Mr. Zuberi. Go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: I nominate Rhéal Fortin, of the Bloc Québécois, for second vice-chair of our committee.

The Clerk: Mr. Zuberi has nominated Mr. Fortin for second vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

I see that Mr. Kelloway has raised his hand. Is it with regard to this?

[English]

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): No, it's not.

[Translation]

The Clerk: There are no further motions. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt this motion to elect Mr. Fortin second vice-chair of the committee?

(Motion agreed to)

• (1115)

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

Congratulations, Mr. Fortin.

I now invite Ms. Khalid to take her virtual chair and continue with this meeting's deliberations.

The Chair (Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

[English]

Thank you for your confidence in me to continue to lead this committee. It's going to be a very heavy agenda for all of us. That means there's going to be a lot of work.

I started this committee in February with the promise that I will do my best to be as transparent, as non-partisan, as neutral and as forthcoming as I can be as a chair. I look forward to continuing my work that way. I'm hoping there are a number of things that we would be able to do in order for us to really be collaborative and to work together in how we put forward important legislation that will impact Canadians on a daily basis.

One thing I do propose, and you can discuss this now or at a later time, is that when we vote, we do it in alphabetical order, regardless of party. It would be a great way for us to set the tone of having a non-partisan discussion and operation in how we conduct ourselves.

I understand that there are routine motion proceedings at this time. Do I have any hands raised to bring forward routine motions?

Go ahead, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Thank you, Madam Chair, and congratulations to you and the vice-chairs. It's nice to meet everybody.

I move to readopt all routine motions from the previous session. If it's the choosing of the chair, I can read those off.

The Chair: Mr. Kelloway, thank you for that.

Mr. Garrison, I understand that you had sent a notice of motion. I'm not sure if it was in order, because the chair had not been elected. I'm not sure whether the committee was able to receive motions at that time, but I do understand that you would be proposing some amendments to the routine motions that we had adopted in the past.

Mr. Kelloway, if that's okay, how about if we go point by point, if you just want to raise them by point? Then, once we get to Mr. Garrison's proposed amendments, we will have a discussion and then continue forward.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Madam Chair, it's good for me.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kelloway. Go ahead with the first one.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Okay.

The motion under "Analyst Services" reads:

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

The Chair: Do I have agreement from everyone on that motion? I see unanimous agreement.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Under the heading "Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure", the motion is:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five (5) members, namely the Chair and one member from each recognized party; and that the subcommittee work in a spirit of collaboration.

The Chair: Do I have agreement from everybody?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Once we go through the routine motions, I will come back to this and we'll establish the next meeting time for the subcommittee.

Thank you for that, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: The motion on "Meeting Without a Quorum" reads:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four members are present, including two members of the opposition and two members of the government; and that when travelling outside the Parliamentary Precinct, the meeting begin after 15 minutes, regardless of members present.

The Chair: Do I have agreement from everybody to adopt this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Please go ahead, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: The motion under "Time for Opening Remarks and Questioning of Witnesses" reads:

That witnesses be given 10 minutes to make their opening statement; and that, at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses in the first round there be allocated six minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows: Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois, New Democratic Party; that for the second and subsequent rounds the order and time for questioning be as follows: Conservative Party, five minutes, Liberal Party, five minutes, Conservative Party, five minutes, Liberal Party, five minutes, Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes, New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes.

● (1120)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Garrison, I understand that this is exactly what your motion speaks to. Would you like to speak to it at this time?

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thanks very much, Madam Chair.

My motion deals with the second round of questioning. I believe it was circulated to members, but I will read it.

I'm moving that the routine motion be amended to replace the text regarding the second round of questioning with the following:

for the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows: Conservative Party, five (5) minutes; Liberal Party, five (5) minutes; Bloc Québécois, two and a half (2.5) minutes; New Democratic Party, two and a half (2.5) minutes; Conservative Party, five (5) minutes; Liberal Party, five (5) minutes.

The Chair: Is there any discussion as to why you're proposing this, Mr. Garrison?

Mr. Randall Garrison: The way the second round tends to work is the third and fourth parties tend to be left out of the second round of questioning. By changing the order, we ensure it's more likely that all of the parties get a chance to participate in each round of questioning. This motion has been adopted in more than a dozen other committees.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garrison.

I open it up for debate. Mr. Kelloway, you are first.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I'm wondering if in that motion we could include the discretion of the chair. The chair has a great pen in this process in terms of being able to modify, meeting to meeting, the timing of opening statements. I'm wondering if there's some consideration for that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Sangha, you are next.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): I want to present a motion.

The Chair: We'll come back to you, Mr. Sangha.

Mr. Virani, please go ahead.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): I appreciate the motion presented by Mr. Garrison. The point he raises is a sound one. We're trying to ensure fairness among the parties in proportion to their representation in the House and ensure that all of the parties get a chance to ask their questions of the witnesses who come before us.

Clearly, Mr. Garrison's motion identifies what has been a problem in the first session of this Parliament, and we're trying to correct that in the second session. That's why I presume it's been passed at many other committees.

I note that other committees have also experienced some technical hiccups, even me personally, and I apologize for that. Sometimes there are some logistical technical issues that arise with getting the committees going in sufficient time. With respect to that, it sometimes means the committee time that's been allotted, a two-hour time frame, can be collapsed and end up as a 90- or 100-minute meeting, for example. We saw that with the heritage committee just yesterday. It had a half-hour dent in its committee time.

The point I'm making here is that we want to ensure fairness for all parties in putting their questions to the witnesses. That's important. Rejigging the order is not something I would object to. Apropos to what Mr. Kelloway just raised, I would propose a friendly amendment that would achieve the goals of ensuring what Mr. Garrison is trying to achieve and also ensure fairness across all parties.

In the first part of the routine motion, in the first line it states, "That witnesses be given 10 minutes". I would propose that we rephrase it to state, "That witnesses be given a minimum of five minutes for their opening statement". That would ensure there is enough time for all of the parties to ask their questions. That does require witnesses to be a bit more precise and concise in their opening statements.

For those of us who are litigators, who are used to time limits and getting our points across—we know how to do it in the House in 60 seconds for an S. O. 31—witnesses can be similarly directed to keep it brief, concise and to the point, and provide five minutes of oral submissions to back up their usually voluminous and detailed written submissions. Saying "a minimum of five minutes" does give you some of that discretion, Madam Chair, that Mr. Kelloway mentioned.

You've done this before, and you've acquitted yourself very well as chair, with the able assistance of the analysts and clerks, but I'm sure that you have the ability to tweak it where necessary. Where

you want to let a witness go longer than five minutes, you could, all the while preserving the time for all of the parties to put their questions, including those who would now be at the end of the list, which would be the Conservatives and the Liberals.

Long story short, my friendly proposal would delete "10 minutes" in the first line of the fourth part of the routine motion, and insert the words "a minimum of five minutes".

• (1125)

The Chair: We have a friendly amendment to the amendment proposed by Mr. Garrison.

We'll continue at this time with the list of speakers.

I have Mr. Maloney next on my list. Mr. Fortin, please raise your hand so that I can recognize you on my list. I don't see you on my list.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: I don't see how I am to indicate that I want to raise my hand.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, could you please guide Mr. Fortin?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: I don't comment often enough. That is why I am unable to figure out how to do it.

The Clerk: Mr. Fortin, if you look at the list of participants, which is open, you can click on your name. One of the options will enable you to raise your hand, I believe.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Ah, yes. Thank you.

The Clerk: You're welcome.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Actually, I don't have it.

The Clerk: Are you clicking on the list of participants?

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: I don't see that option.

Mrs. Julia Nicol (Committee Researcher): Normally, it should be at the bottom of the screen.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: I have found it, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fortin.

[*English*]

You're awesome. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Maloney is next on the list to talk about the proposed amendment by Mr. Gerretsen and then the friendly amendment by Mr. Virani.

Mr. James Maloney: Thanks, Madam Chair.

I agree with everything that Mr. Virani has just said. I would like to remind people that this issue was addressed at PROC. As somebody said yesterday at a different committee, PROC is viewed as the committee of all committees. If it was deemed good enough there to adopt this process that Mr. Gerretsen and Mr. Virani have suggested, then it should be good enough for us. I recognize that committees have the power to determine their own destiny and their own process, but I think we should view having had it considered at PROC as a good precedent and adopt it.

As for the time limits, I am also a litigator, like Mr. Virani. Sadly, lawyers—and now I realize, politicians—cannot always be brief, and time limits are necessary. Over my shoulder, you'll see a framed picture. It's a quote from a former associate justice of the United States Supreme Court in which he says, "Be pointed, be brief, and let your matter stand". In other words, cut to the chase, because it saves people a lot of time.

Although we are good at it, sometimes witnesses need a little bit of steering in that process. I think five minutes is adequate time for witnesses to deliver their opening remarks, keeping in mind that the chair has absolute discretion. I have confidence in our chair that if a witness is five minutes into their opening statement and appears they need another minute, she will give them a minute. It all comes out in the wash at the end, in my experience. I find that the questions usually generate more useful information than the opening statements do. Having more time for questions is a good thing.

I propose we vote collectively on the amendments that Mr. Gerretsen and Mr. Virani put on the table.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Mr. Maloney.

I have Mr. Zuberi next on the list, and then Mr. Moore.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Thanks, Madam Chair, for all the work you're doing.

I would like to support what Mr. Virani said with respect to reducing that minimum time given to witnesses to five minutes and leaving it at your discretion to give witnesses more than that.

There are two reasons. The first is that we unanimously put you and the other vice-chairs forth, which means that we have trust and confidence in your ability to manage us and to manage the time that we are dealing with.

Secondly, I'm learning, as many of those around the table who are more experienced than I am know, that most of what the expert witnesses want to say actually comes out through the questions and answers. That's really where the meat is in terms of their testimony, in terms of what we want to hear and in terms of what is helpful for us as legislators for tweaking the bills that are coming in front of us.

For those reasons, I hope we can agree that this friendly amendment from Mr. Virani is in fact friendly and we can move ahead with it.

• (1130)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Zuberi.

I have the Hon. Rob Moore next on the list.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. Congratulations on your appointment.

I agree with what Mr. Garrison has put forward.

I do not believe we should reduce the time limit from 10 minutes to five minutes, and I will tell you why.

We heard from Mr. Virani and Mr. Maloney, who referenced being litigators, but many of the witnesses who appear before us are not lawyers or litigators. It's their first time appearing in a very intimidating format. If what we're saying is that upon arrival, someone who has prepared a 10-minute statement would then be told that, by the way, they only have five minutes, I could foresee that causing more angst for someone who's probably already under a lot of pressure.

I think of the bills we're going to be receiving and the studies we're going to be doing. Not everyone is going to have the kind of experience to be able to handle that.

I would propose a friendly amendment to the friendly amendment and say maybe seven and a half or eight minutes. If we have three witnesses and we reduce their time from 10 to eight or seven and a half minutes, that picks up quite a bit of time that we may have wasted due to technical difficulties. The onus is on us to get our technical challenges under control. I don't want to put any more pressure on witnesses than they are already under.

I think cutting their time in half is a bit too much if what we're proposing is that it would be done on the spot. I would say, at the most, reduce the time to seven and a half minutes.

The Chair: Thanks very much for your intervention, Mr. Moore.

I have Monsieur Fortin next.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: I think that we could give between five and 10 minutes to witnesses, and they will take the time they want. I agree with Mr. Garrison that it's important to have all the members of the committee able to speak during the second round. We can word it in a thousand and one ways, but that is the important part.

The NDP and the Bloc Québécois already have a reduced speaking time. We have two and a half minutes, compared to the five minutes allocated to the Conservatives and the Liberals. I will not go over this again, as I understand that this is the way that has been—

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Fortin, hold on for a second, please.

Do we have translation for Monsieur Fortin? We do. Wonderful.

Please continue, Monsieur Fortin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: I apologize, I was not on the French channel.

Mr. Garrison's argument seems quite relevant to me. We have to make sure that all the committee members can speak in the second round. Right now, the issue is that the two rounds of Liberals and Conservatives come before the Bloc Québécois and the NDP. So, we occasionally do not speak at all.

So I think giving five or 10 minutes to the witnesses is not the issue. It's not a matter of five minutes exactly. That does not change much. The important is to ensure that, in terms of speaking time, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois are entitled to their two and a half minutes, which is already very little. If we compare that to the speaking times of the Liberals and Conservatives, they each have five minutes twice, so 10 minutes in total. Therefore, we must ensure that our turn comes before what is actually the third round of the Conservatives and Liberals. That seems fair to me.

So I will vote accordingly. Respected colleagues, I invite all of you to reach a first unanimous decision on this issue.

• (1135)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Fortin.

Before I go to Mr. Garrison, who is next on the list, if you had your hand raised and you have already spoken, can I ask you to lower your hand proactively, so that the next time you want to speak it will put you at the bottom of the list? Right now I have a number of people who are appearing at the top of my list, and I know you have already spoken.

With that, I go to Mr. Garrison, please.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

In terms of the way we deal with these questions, there is no such thing as a friendly amendment, but I know we sometimes proceed more informally. It would be helpful if we separate the two questions here and deal with my motion separately from the question of time limits for the introductory remarks, since we appear to have a difference of opinion on them.

If we could deal with my motion and then deal with the second motion on the time for introductory statements, it would make it easier for us to make decisions.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Virani, just take note that your amendment is no longer friendly, so we'll have a subamendment to the amendment to the actual motion in the routine motions.

Before we get to that, I will go to Mr. Maloney.

You're next on the list.

Mr. James Maloney: Thanks, Madam Chair.

Mr. Garrison, I thought everything was quite friendly to this point, frankly.

It seems that everybody agrees that the speaking order in the second round can be changed, but some of us are only prepared to do

that in exchange for a reduction in time for the opening remarks, which I think is fair.

Mr. Moore, I take your point. If somebody shows up expecting to speak for 10 minutes and then they're told they can speak for only five minutes, that's inappropriate. However, the witnesses are going to be told well in advance that they have only five minutes. As I said earlier, I have faith in our chair. You know from your experience that 10 minutes becomes 12 minutes and five minutes becomes seven minutes. Even when we're asking questions, six minutes becomes eight minutes sometimes. You have to have flexibility in these things. If our goal is to accommodate the NDP and the Bloc in getting their question slots, and making sure that everybody has an opportunity to speak, which we all agree on as being a good idea, then I think a reduction in the time is acceptable. The witnesses are going to be told in advance and we do have the flexibility of the chair.

Mr. Garrison, I might suggest to you that we vote on it all together. I wouldn't want to see a situation in which the people who are in the second camp I mentioned earlier, those being the ones who are in favour of changing the order but only if the introductory remarks time is reduced as well, are put in a position where they have to choose—sort of an all or nothing. I think it would be in everybody's best interests if we did this as one motion.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that, Mr. Maloney.

I'll go to Mr. Virani next.

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I agree that no one wants to take a witness by surprise, to reiterate the point Mr. Maloney just made. It should be clearly articulated to witnesses prior to their arrival what the time limit would be. I think injecting the discretionary point in the hands of the chair is critical to addressing the second point raised by Mr. Moore, which is that if perhaps five minutes is too short, maybe something in the order of seven and a half minutes would be sufficient.

I want to reiterate that we live in a world of time limits, so witnesses coming here, even if it's their first time, have to understand that time is not unlimited. We don't have nine-hour committee meetings, absent certain extreme situations. There's always a time limit that's applied. We're just debating what the time limit should be.

I don't know whether to call it friendly or not, but my original language was that it was a minimum of five minutes. That is what I indicated, but it could be something along the lines of, "that witnesses be given between five and seven and a half minutes, at the discretion of the Chair, for their opening statement". That would perhaps accommodate what Mr. Moore was indicating but give flexibility and a potential window, and it would still save time so that all people could pose their questions.

As Mr. Maloney said, we are absolutely in favour of rejigging the order so that the third and fourth parties get the ability to ask a second round of questions. It's unfair for them not to be able to do so, but let's ensure that Liberal and Conservative parties also have the ability, if they are now on the back end, to pose their questions. That can be accommodated by a slight adjustment in the time limits.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1140)

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Virani.

Before I go to Mr. Sangha, who is next on the list, I just want to clarify that, as we're adopting these routine motions, we basically conduct our committee according to these routine motions. When we send invitations to witnesses to come and present before us, we will tell them ahead of time, "This is how much time you have allotted to you for your opening remarks, and then there will be questions and answers". Logistically, they would not be taken by surprise in any way, based on whatever we finally agree on with the routine motions and how we decide to govern ourselves. I just wanted to clarify that.

With that said, Mr. Sangha, you're next on the list.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and congratulations on your re-election today.

I want to make a motion regarding seniors. It is on elder abuse and neglect by caregivers.

The Chair: Hold on, Mr. Sangha. We're still discussing routine motions at this time, so that motion is a bit early.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: All right, thank you.

The Chair: If you have motions, we'll come back to you after we're done the routine motions. In the meantime, can you lower your hand so that I know not to come to you until we have passed the routine motions?

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Yes, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Maguire, you are next.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thanks, Madam Chair,

It's good to be back on the committee, even just for a day.

Listening to the discussions, I see there is agreement to change the order. Mr. Virani just indicated that. I appreciate that and follow that as well. I agree with that.

I'd like to add that I remember Mr. Moore made comments about people being nervous. It is some time ago—many decades, actually—since I first made a presentation to a House of Commons committee meeting, and I was as nervous as hell.

I just want to say that having a few extra minutes above the five minutes is not out of order. Maybe 10 minutes is too many, but we could easily say seven or eight minutes. If you want to go to seven and a half minutes for a minimum presentation, if they don't want to use all of that, then of course they don't have to, but it puts the

onus back on the people who are making the presentation to determine what their presentation will be.

I know full well that the time limit is clarified before they start, but sometimes people are nervous when they are getting going, so I would look at a compromise on the amount of time for the presentations to be made.

The Chair: Thanks very much for that, Mr. Maguire.

It is really wonderful to have you, even if it is just for the one day. You're quite a personality on our committee. We're going to miss you. Thank you for being here.

I have Mr. Fortin next on the speakers list.

Please go ahead, Mr. Fortin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: I cannot take away my raised hand. However, all that I can add to what I already said is that witness speaking time is no problem for me, be it five or 10 minutes. I think it would be important to let them know in advance for the sake of fairness.

The situation is different for us. Mr. Garrison is proposing to ensure that the Bloc and the NDP can speak in the second round, a request I agree with and think is important for fairness. As for whether the witnesses will have five, seven or 10 introductory minutes, I am somewhat certain that they will all balance out. All they want is to be informed ahead of time.

So even if we were to spend the afternoon arguing on one or two minutes more or less in terms of introductory speaking time, I don't think that changes much.

• (1145)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thanks very much, Mr. Fortin, for your intervention.

I have Mr. Moore next on my list.

Hon. Rob Moore: Thanks.

Not to belabour the point, but I think there is some confusion over what was proposed by Mr. Virani. When it was originally presented, I thought I heard him say that because there could be technical difficulties at the beginning of the meeting, witnesses' time could be reduced. Now we're talking about something quite different.

Obviously the witness needs to know. It is only professional that we tell people in advance how much time they will have. I'm comfortable with saying that the witnesses would speak for seven and a half minutes and I'm comfortable with what Mr. Garrison has proposed for the speaking order, but I find problematic the idea that we would use up the witnesses' time rather than find some other way.

I don't know that we're all talking about the same thing. What I heard was that we would have 10 minutes of speaking per witness unless, at the chair's discretion, we found that we had less time because of some technical glitch, and then the witness would be told, "By the way, you only have five minutes, not the 10 minutes we originally told you." Now we're talking about something different, and it is a really important distinction. If we're talking about a permanent move to seven and a half minutes, then that's quite different.

Once we get up and running, we would probably have very little reason to reduce a witness's time to speak, and if anything, that should come out of the question time, not out of the one shot that witnesses have to put their thoughts out there.

Maybe we could get a little clarity on the nature of the amendment. Are we sticking with 10 minutes with a potential to reduce it, or are we looking at a more permanent change to the standing order?

The Chair: Thanks very much, Mr. Moore.

Mr. Virani, before we come to you, I have Mr. Zuberi and Mr. Maloney on the list. If I have the consent of everybody, I'll go straight to Mr. Virani so that he can speak to clarify what Mr. Moore is asking. I see nodding from everybody.

Mr. Virani, go ahead, please.

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to everyone else on the committee.

To be crystal clear, what I'm trying to do is suggest an amendment to the motion that was presented by Mr. Garrison. The first point is that I believe we should vote on the amendment to Mr. Garrison's motion before voting on Mr. Garrison's motion itself.

Second, I just want to reiterate that I do believe a point that has not really been fully fleshed out here is that by limiting an opening statement of a witness, we're not purporting to limit their evidence. We know, as members of this committee, including people who have done this through multiple Parliaments, that a lot of witness testimony actually is solicited via questioning, and usually in a much more robust and analytical manner, as opposed to simply through the opening statement. It is through the questioning that we get a lot of the answers to the questions that are pertinent for our purposes and help us in drafting legislation, including amendments to legislation.

To be very clear in terms of what Mr. Moore just asked, what I'm proposing is that Mr. Garrison's motion be amended in a way such that we would amend the language in line one of that same paragraph. The paragraph currently reads, "That witnesses be given 10 minutes for their opening statement". In an attempt to meet Mr. Moore partway in terms of what he's been suggesting, what I'm proposing in terms of language is that the first line would read, "That witnesses be given between five and seven and a half minutes, at the discretion of the Chair, for their opening statement". That would be the first line of that passage.

It is a firm change to the rules, but I do believe it accommodates the length of time that Mr. Moore, Mr. Maguire and others have indicated. Maybe we need it to be similar, in a range allowing up to

seven and a half minutes, but still shortening it from the original 10 minutes, because of the various hiccups that occur at committees and because of the necessity of ensuring that all parties are able to ask a second round of questions.

• (1150)

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Virani.

We'll go to Mr. Zuberi next. Please go ahead, Mr. Zuberi.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: I want to support what Mr. Virani just said. I feel strongly that a lot of what we want to hear as members will come out through the questions and answers. We know we're operating remotely. We just saw at this meeting that a lot of us had sound check challenges, and then some of us were logging in with our P9s. We're scheduled to run until one o'clock. Personally, I have a meeting at one o'clock. We know that sometimes we have hard stops for members to participate fully, so I feel that what Mr. Virani is proposing does accommodate what Mr. Garrison and Mr. Fortin rightfully want, which is equity with respect to time and with respect to questions.

This is what we should be seeking as members to really bring out pieces of legislation that are meaningful and that serve the full population within the country. This allows for that. It accommodates that by giving everybody time to ask questions. It also allows for the chair to do the chair's job, which is to shepherd our conversation and to shepherd the time allotted to witnesses. It allows us to have a really fulsome conversation.

I'm just hoping that we can come to some form of agreement here by hashing together these ideas and moving a bit. For this reason, I think Mr. Virani just put forth an accommodation himself. Initially he was suggesting a minimum of five minutes. Now he's saying a window of between five and seven and a half minutes. At the same time we'll request the equity principle. I hope we can agree to this together.

The Chair: Thank you so much for that, Mr. Zuberi.

I have Mr. Maloney next on my list.

Mr. James Maloney: Thanks, Madam Chair.

I'm not going to repeat anything that's been said already. We've all been in committee meetings where we wish that 10 minutes was three minutes or that 10 minutes was 30 minutes. It depends on the witness.

It goes back to the chair's discretion. I will repeat that most of the important evidence comes out during the course of the questions. I understand Mr. Moore's concern. I think that any technical difficulty should not fall in the lap of the witness, and I don't think that was Mr. Virani's intent.

My sense here is that we have an agreement. We're just not clear on what it is. I think we all agree on Mr. Garrison's original motion. We want to accommodate his request. We still have some divide in the group as to whether or not we do that by reducing the opening statements at all, and if so, whether it's seven and a half, five minutes or something in between all of that.

What I would suggest is, rather than go around and around, somebody can speak to Mr. Garrison on the side, and we can work out language that addresses his concern and accommodates everybody else's response. We can then get this done and over with.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Maloney.

I have Mr. Moore and Monsieur Fortin on my list.

Before I go to them, Mr. Clerk, I just want to seek some clarity. What we have before us are two proposed amendments to the routine motion for time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses. The first amendment, which has been proposed from the floor, by my understanding is in the first line of that motion, which is that witnesses be given five to seven and a half minutes for their opening statement. The second amendment is what is being proposed by Mr. Garrison on the second round of questions within the text of that routine motion. Am I correct to say that?

The Clerk: Yes, you are correct in your understanding, if I'm not mistaken, with the nuance that Mr. Virani would like to add, in the first sentence of the motion, when we say that witnesses be given between five to seven and a half minutes, "at the discretion of the Chair, for their opening statement".

• (1155)

The Chair: Would that be something that you would agree to Mr. Virani? I see a thumbs up.

Mr. Clerk, can we just have that as the official amendment Mr. Virani is proposing at this time? Is that okay?

The Clerk: Absolutely.

The Chair: On the floor, we have these two amendments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Chair, I just want to be certain that it's clear, as it isn't for me.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Monsieur Fortin. I'm just seeking some clarity from the clerk. I see you on the list. I will come to you in 30 seconds. I just want to be sure that I know exactly what is before me. Thank you.

Mr. Clerk, we have before us two amendments to the main routine motion. What I'm trying to understand is whether we vote on both of these amendments separately, if we're not coming together with one language within the committee.

The Clerk: Yes. That's what I would suggest to facilitate your deliberations. You can vote on both the amendments, one after the other.

The Chair: Thank you so much for that clarity, Mr. Clerk.

I will now go to Mr. Moore, who is next on my list. After Mr. Moore, I have Monsieur Fortin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: I just want to get something clarified. I am not going to be getting into the substance of the motion.

As far as I understand, these are two proposed amendments to the routine motion. However, they concern two different topics. I must say, with all due respect, Madam Chair, that the way you have presented them gave me the impression that you were interpreting Mr. Virani's motion as if it were amending Mr. Garrison's motion. However, this is not a subamendment to Mr. Garrison's amendment.

Mr. Virani is proposing an amendment to the routine motion, and Mr. Garrison is proposing another amendment to the same motion. If I understand correctly, those two amendments can be adopted or rejected, or one can be adopted and the other one rejected.

[*English*]

The Chair: You're correct, Monsieur Fortin.

If you recall, Mr. Virani tried to put forward a friendly amendment to Mr. Garrison's amendment, but I think we ultimately decided that these are going to be two separate amendments to that routine motion with respect to timing for opening remarks. We will be voting two separate times, it seems, at this point, unless we can come to an agreement otherwise. I'm happy to keep the debate open until I'm satisfied that each and every one of you is satisfied with how we will proceed.

Mr. Moore, you're next on the list. Thank you for your patience.

Hon. Rob Moore: I think there was a mischaracterization that this was a subamendment. In fact, it doesn't amend what Mr. Garrison is proposing.

I think there is a great deal of agreement around what Mr. Garrison is proposing. I certainly support it, but the more I hear about this time change at the chair's discretion.... There's no reason whatsoever that we as a committee cannot set the length of time that witnesses are to speak.

We're going to get quite used to this format very quickly. There should be work done with witnesses to have them set up. They're not just going to log in the moment our committee starts. There should be work done to make sure they're up and running and ready to testify.

The most important thing that those individuals are going to want to get out, the thing that they think will be impactful to our study, is what they're going to say in their opening statement. I do not accept that, within a two-hour time frame, we cannot tell people that the way our committee operates is that they have seven and a half minutes to speak and that it won't be reduced to five, and certainly not from 10 down to five.

I'm certainly supportive of what Mr. Garrison is proposing. I don't want to belabour the point, but the more I'm hearing, the more I'm uncomfortable with having some kind of fluid characterization of when.... I think that's the one thing that should be quite solid: how much time our witnesses have. For all of them, it's going to be their moment when they get to testify at a House of Commons committee. For all of us, this is our day to day. They're the ones under the most intense pressure. In order to have as much certainty as possible, I think it's only fair that we say that witnesses have the seven and a half minutes.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you so much, Mr. Moore, for your intervention.

Before I go to Mr. Garrison, who is next on my list, I'll turn to Mr. Clerk to confirm that witnesses have the ability to submit written briefs as well as their verbal remarks when they're invited to present.

The Clerk: Yes, you're right. They do, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you for that, Mr. Clerk.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Garrison, who is next on the list.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much, Madam Chair.

In terms of procedures, I am agreeing with what the chair is suggesting. These both amend the same section. If we deal with the question of the opening time limits first and then deal with my motion, that's fine. I think that works well for all of us.

I'm supportive of Mr. Virani's amendment. I think we all know that in practice, the number of witnesses on a panel has quite often determined how much time we give those witnesses who are appearing. I don't think this is actually a change in our practice, with the wording Mr. Virani has suggested. Sometimes we have more witnesses on a panel; sometimes we have fewer.

I'm supportive of dealing with these sequentially, starting with the time limit, and I'm supportive of Mr. Virani's amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garrison.

You're absolutely right. I think the past couple of months we had were an experience. We were able to go back and forth, depending on the situation of the day, depending on the number of witnesses, and so on. Obviously, our job as a committee is to make sure we are able to use a witness's expertise to better inform how we conduct ourselves through the legislation process, through our committee process, to inform any amendments and debate on legislation. I appreciate that.

Monsieur Fortin, is your hand raised from the last time, or do you want to speak again?

You're okay. All right. Thank you.

Mr. Clerk, we have two amendments that are before us for the routine motion on the time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses. The first amendment is proposed by Mr. Virani. It is to amend the first line to read, "That witnesses be given between five and seven and a half minutes, at the discretion of the Chair, for their opening statement". Is that accurate?

The Clerk: It is, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Do we want to vote on both of the amendments together or individually? I'll take a nodding or shaking of heads at this time.

The Clerk: If I may say so, I think it would be preferable to vote on each of these since they don't amend the same part of the main motion.

The Chair: Okay.

For that first amendment, maybe we can go ahead. Do we want to do a show of hands, on division, or would we like to have a recorded vote on this?

Mr. Michael Cooper: I request a recorded vote, Madam Chair.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cooper.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 7; nays 3)

The Chair: That amendment is now adopted within the original routine motion.

We'll go to the second amendment, which is proposed by Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Clerk, please guide us in reading out how that would amend the original motion. Actually, before you do that, I realize that I can't see Ms. Findlay on the screen.

Mr. Moore, would you like us to suspend while we get her back on, or should we continue?

Hon. Rob Moore: I'm sure she's trying to get back on. Maybe we could suspend for a couple of minutes.

Madam Chair, also when the clerk was reading out the names, I don't know if everyone else had this issue, but I wasn't hearing the clerk. I am hearing everything else, just not the clerk.

The Chair: That's interesting. I heard the clerk call your name and everybody else's name as well.

Mr. Clerk, do you want to see if Mr. Moore needs some IT help?

The Clerk: Sure.

Hon. Rob Moore: I hear you now—

The Clerk: That's perfect.

Hon. Rob Moore: —but I wasn't hearing you when you were reading the names.

The Clerk: As for Ms. Findlay, we had a message at 11:58 from our great technicians here. She's having connection issues. The technician was already on the phone with her and she was trying at that time to connect from another location. That's just for your information as well.

The Chair: Mr. Moore, would you like us to continue, or would you like us to wait? In the interest of collaboration, I want to make sure that everybody is well represented here. I just want to make sure that we have your consent before we continue.

Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Chair, I would ask that we suspend briefly to give Ms. Findlay time.

The Chair: We'll suspend for five minutes then. Don't go too far.

• (1205) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1210)

The Chair: Welcome back, everybody.

Mr. Clerk, do we have an update on Ms. Findlay?

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: About a minute ago, I asked our technicians to give us an update, but that update is unfortunately still not available. I presume that they're still trying to resolve the technical issue Ms. Findlay is experiencing.

• (1215)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Moore, help me determine how to proceed.

Mr. Moore, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Maguire, how should we be doing this?

Hon. Rob Moore: I think we were still discussing Mr. Garrison's motion, so we can at least move to that for now if you like.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Moore.

With that, then, Mr. Clerk, can you help us firm up the language of the routine motion in terms of time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses? That would reflect the motion that we've just passed now, as well as the motion that is being proposed by Mr. Garrison.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: Madam Chair, Mr. Virani's motion was actually proposing that five to seven and a half minutes—at the Chair's discretion—be allocated to witnesses for their presentations. That has been passed, so it's done.

Mr. Garrison's amendment concerned the part of the motion on the second round of questions following witness presentations. The original motion proposes that the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party each have five minutes twice in a row, and that the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party each have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Garrison's amendment proposes that the time allocated to the Bloc Québécois and to the New Democratic Party now be provided in the middle of that round of questions, following the first five minutes of the Conservative Party and first five minutes of the Liberal Party. So the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party would be given two and a half minutes each before the second round of questions is wrapped up with the Conservative Party for five minutes and the Liberal Party for five minutes.

I think that clarifies matters, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any clarification needed from any of the members at this time?

I noticed that Ms. Findlay is not back yet, and I'm hesitant to vote on this.

Mr. Clerk, would it be proper for us to move to the next few routine motions, and then once Ms. Findlay is back we can have a vote on this? Is that proper and within the rules?

The Clerk: Yes. If the committee consents, it's okay to do so.

The Chair: Do I have the consent of the committee?

(Amendment allowed to stand)

(Motion allowed to stand)

The Chair: Mr. Kelloway, please go ahead with your next routine motion. I think it's on document distribution.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: It is. Thanks, Madam Chair.

On document distribution, I move:

That the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the committee and only when such documents exist in both official languages, and that witnesses be advised accordingly.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Please read the next one, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: On working meals, I move:

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

That, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses not exceeding two representatives per organization; and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

The Chair: Is that something that everybody is in agreement with?

Mr. Arif Virani: On a point of clarification, Madam Chair, will meals be sent to me in my constituency office in Toronto on the committee's tab?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: I would agree with that.

Mr. James Maloney: We'll call that the Uber amendment.

Some hon members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Let's not go through with an Uber amendment, guys.

Are we good with this routine motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Kelloway, can you please continue with the next one?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Certainly.

On access to in camera meetings, I move:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person at in camera meetings and that each party be allowed one additional staff person at such meetings.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1220)

The Chair: Next is on transcripts of in camera meetings.

Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I move:

That one copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee or by their staff.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one, Mr. Kelloway, is on notices of motions.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I move:

That 48 hours' notice be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, provided that (a) the notice be filed with the clerk of the committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; that (b) the motion be distributed to Members in both official languages by the clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour; and, that (c) notices received after the deadline hour or on non-business days be deemed to have been received during the next business day and that when the committee is travelling on official business, no substantive motions may be moved.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Kelloway, please read the next one.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: On orders of reference from the House respecting bills, I move:

That, in relation to orders of reference from the House respecting Bills, (a) the clerk of the committee shall, upon the committee receiving such an order of reference, write to each Member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee to invite those Members to file with the clerk of the committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the Bill, which is the subject of the said order, which they would suggest that the committee consider; (b) suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a), at least 48 hours prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill to which the amendments relate shall be deemed to be proposed during the said consideration, provided that the Committee may, by motion, vary this deadline in respect of a given Bill; and (c) during the clause-by-clause consideration of a Bill, the Chair shall allow a Member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kelloway. Are there any other motions?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Madam Chair, just as a point of clarification, I have on my list "Other Routine Motions Adopted 2020/02/25". Is that something that needs to be read into this discussion?

The Chair: It's really up to the committee if it wants to move that. I know we adopted it in the last one. If it's the will of the committee, we're more than happy to adopt it again. Please let me know if that's something you would like to propose.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Mr. Kelloway, can you please go ahead and read that motion into the record then?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Regarding other routine motions adopted on February 25, 2020, I move:

That the committee meet in camera for the following purposes only: (a) to discuss administrative matters, including witness selection, meeting schedule and meeting location, (b) to review draft reports, (c) to hold briefings related to national security, (d) to hear witness testimony when necessary for the witness'

protection, privacy, confidentiality or safety; and that the committee may meet in camera for any other reason by majority decision of its members.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Kelloway, for your very efficient reading of the motions in here.

I know we need to go back to the routine motion for the questioning of witnesses, but before I do that, I'll go to Mr. Garrison for any interventions he may have.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

As we're trying to get used to the new virtual and hybrid meetings, I wonder if we could ask the clerk to report back to us on whether it would be feasible to allow each committee member to have one staff member logged into the Zoom meetings, as well as one from each whip's office. If that's possible for in camera meetings, I don't see why it should not also be possible for this meeting. We could have, of course, their microphones and cameras remain switched off.

I've had reports both yesterday and today of staff having a very difficult time following the meetings, as they lose connections or as ParlVu delays occur. My request, then, would be that we ask the clerk to look into whether we could adopt the same rule for the regular meetings of the committee as has already been provided for the in camera meetings.

• (1225)

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Clerk, do you want to speak to that?

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Garrison. It's a good point.

I can commit to the committee to report back to my management about the concerns that I'm hearing right now and to see if indeed it's a possibility or not. I can report to the committee at a later time when I receive a response. The clerks, like members of Parliament, do meet, a bit like a caucus, so there will be opportunities for me to pass on that message. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

I'd also just like to check with you on whether we have Madam Findlay back on yet so that we can finalize the last of the routine motions.

The Clerk: We do have an update, but unfortunately the update is to the effect that we are unable to get MP Findlay back into the Zoom meeting at this time. There's not even an estimated time of arrival for her. Unfortunately, we did the best we could, but it doesn't seem to be possible to have her back for the remaining proceedings today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Moore, do you want to suspend the meeting or should we continue with the rest of the meeting?

Hon. Rob Moore: I think we can continue with Mr. Garrison's motion. That was the one outstanding item, I believe.

The Chair: Okay. My understanding is that we're going to have a recorded vote. I don't see Mr. Cooper on here anymore either.

Mr. Michael Cooper: I'm here, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Oh, there you are. I can see you now. Thank you very much, Mr. Cooper. It's quite strange for me to have you be so quiet all the time. You'll have to liven things up a bit so I know you're there. Thank you, Mr. Cooper.

Mr. James Maloney: Be careful what you ask for, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Arif Virani: There is one brief point, on the point that Randall made to the clerk, Madam Chair.

Mr. Clerk, if you could just clarify for the purpose of what Mr. Garrison asked you about what other committees are doing, that would be helpful. Perhaps you could report back what various committees within the House of Commons are doing to facilitate the participation of staff, because I think that's something we'd probably all be keen on doing if it's manageable. Thank you.

The Clerk: I can report on that, but at this time all committees are doing the same thing, which means that for public meetings staffers are invited to listen to the proceedings through phone lines or by watching ParlVu. For in camera meetings, they are allowed to be in the virtual room with the remaining participants, including members of Parliament, with their cameras and microphones off. At this time, all the committees are following the same practice that I just described.

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much for that, Mr. Clerk.

We'll go ahead with the recorded vote for what is the routine motion for time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses.

Mr. Clerk, could you please proceed in alphabetical order for all members?

The Clerk: Thank you, and I'm told that Ms. Findlay is trying to reconnect, so maybe she will arrive right on time when I call her name. Let's see.

I don't think Ms. Findlay has arrived yet.

The Chair: We'll come back to her at the end.

• (1230)

The Clerk: We have not heard from Ms. Findlay, Madam Chair, but she might be a bit out of context, though, on what she will be requested to vote on, so I'll leave that in your good hands, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Madam Findlay, we were just in the process of voting on the question of witnesses. I'm not sure if you've been able to caucus with your party on which way to vote, but we will open it up to you if you would like to vote one way or the other on that.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Okay.

I'm not sure exactly which motion is in front of us. When I left there were amendments and—

The Chair: This is the one that was—

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: So what are we voting on, Madam Chair?

The Chair: This is the motion that has been proposed by Mr. Garrison to amend the second round of questioning to move up the Bloc and the NDP to a higher level within the round of questions so that they're, I think, second in order. In sessions it would be the Conservatives, the Liberals, the Bloc, then the NDP, then the Conservatives, and then the Liberals, instead of what is indicated in the routine motion from last February.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Okay, thank you.

I heard the motion when you presented it, so I would vote yes, in favour.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that, Ms. Findlay.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you, everybody.

We have now gone through the routine motions.

Mr. Garrison, thank you for helping us amend it so that it is more inclusive, more fair, and more transparent. We really appreciate that.

I just want to talk a little bit before we go into committee business for what will be the rest of the meeting. I would like each party to identify who is going to be their representative on the subcommittee for agenda so that we can start scheduling a meeting at the earliest, as we continue with what will obviously be a very heavy legislative agenda.

I'll go to Monsieur Fortin—sorry, to Mr. Moore first—to identify who's going to be their representative on the subcommittee.

Hon. Rob Moore: For now, I'll be the representative, thanks.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Fortin, I understand that you will be the representative.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: I will consult the other members of my caucus who are members of this committee, and I think we will come to a unanimous decision, based on which I will speak for the Bloc Québécois.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much for that, Monsieur Fortin.

Mr. Garrison, you're good?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Who will it be from the Liberal side?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I really like the words and comments of Mr. Fortin regarding his unanimous nomination. I will be representing the Liberal Party in this subcommittee.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much for that, Mr. Virani.

With that, Mr. Clerk, could we schedule at the earliest opportunity a meeting with the subcommittee to go over agenda and scheduling for the remainder of the year and how, logistically, we're going to conduct ourselves for the remainder? If you could please do this at your earliest convenience, it would be really wonderful, perhaps by either the end of this week or very early next week so we can get the ball rolling.

I'm excited. I'm sure you guys are, too. Thank you.

Just on that note, I know that Bill C-3 will be coming to our committee very soon and I know that we had done a lot of work on it in the past number of months before prorogation. I want to make sure that all of that work has not gone to waste.

In the subcommittee that we will have, we'll discuss the timing of amendments to that bill to be proposed and whether, at the next meeting, we want to adopt the evidence that we've heard, as well as other logistical challenges that we may or may not have with Bill C-3. Obviously I want to give everybody enough time to put forward any amendments. I know that prior to the pandemic and our having to go home, we had established deadlines for proposing amendments to Bill C-3. The bill in and of itself has not really changed in language at all, so I anticipate that we will have already done that work in terms of what amendments we want to put forward.

We will have that discussion in more detail during the subcommittee, but I wanted to flag for you that that is the direction we're moving in.

Now, Mr. Moore, I saw a notice of motion by you with respect to the main estimates and inviting the Minister of Justice, Attorney General and department officials to appear on the main estimates for two hours and for that meeting be televised.

In terms of how we're conducting ourselves and really how I'm hoping to be able to keep our committee very open and transparent, I was also hoping to invite the minister for the main estimates regardless, in the next little while, before the deadline obviously, at his earliest convenience given his schedule.

However, I'm happy to open this motion for debate if any of you wants to speak to it. It may just be prudent given the timing, etc., that we're able to get this through and invite the minister at his earliest convenience.

I will give you the floor, Mr. Moore, if you'd like to speak to that.

• (1235)

Hon. Rob Moore: Thank you, Madam Chair, and you summed it up quite nicely. That was my motion, that the minister be invited to appear on the estimates.

The Chair: Thanks very much, Mr. Moore.

I understand that the deadline is November 27.

Mr. Virani, I see your hand raised. Is that to speak on this?

Mr. Arif Virani: Yes, apropos to the point you just made, you pre-empted Mr. Moore and you're pre-empting me, Madam Chair. Perhaps for the purposes of accuracy, if we all understand that the deadline is November 27, perhaps the motion should indicate that it be not later than November 27, which is a date that's prescribed in any event by the Standing Orders if not by the statute.

The Chair: Thanks very much for that clarity, Mr. Virani.

Mr. Moore, considering that we're going to be proactively inviting the minister based on this deadline anyway, would you still like to go ahead and move this motion or is it okay for us to have the clerk send out that invitation right away?

Hon. Rob Moore: I think I will move the motion. As of right now, we're coming together for the first time today, but we don't have any committee business at the moment, so I'd like to move the motion. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Wonderful. Thank you very much.

Mr. Virani, is that your hand raised again, or did you forget to...?

Mr. Arif Virani: I forgot to lower it, but it's good that I forgot.

What I'm asking, Madam Chair, is whether it would be prudent to insert "department officials to appear on the main estimates no later than November 27 for two hours" etc.

The Chair: Mr. Moore, do you accept that friendly amendment?

Hon. Rob Moore: Well, I think I'm hoping that this would be done sooner rather than later, because currently we do not have any bills before our committee. No, I'd just like to say that we do this as soon as possible.

The Chair: That's fair.

Mr. Virani, do you want to put forward a subamendment or are we going to let this pass so we can just invite the minister as soon as possible?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Chair, I'm just cognizant of the fact that we have a bill that's about to come to us when it gets voted on, which is Bill C-3, the judges training act. We have the medically assisted dying bill, which is being debated for two more days in the House this coming week, which will then be coming to this committee. We have a conversion therapy bill that would be coming to this committee.

The medical assistance in dying bill is subject to a court-imposed deadline of December 18. It will be my position and my party's strong position that we need to move forward with that expeditiously and I don't want that court-imposed deadline to be jeopardized, so I think stipulating no later than November 27 is important in the context of this motion.

I'm not trying to be obstructionist. I'm just trying to make it crystal clear as to the timing for when the minister must come by. That's all.

• (1240)

The Chair: Thanks very much for that, Mr. Virani.

Mr. Maloney, I see your hand raised. Would you like to speak to this?

Mr. James Maloney: I think we've agreed to invite the minister. The minister is going to come and departmental officials are going to come on the earliest date available when his schedule permits. Do we need any more clarity than that? I don't think so. We have other things going on, but we're going to accommodate the minister and he is going to accommodate us as soon as he can.

The Chair: Okay, so at this time then, Mr. Virani, are you submitting an amendment to Mr. Moore's motion with respect to timing or not?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Chair, I would ask if we could suspend for two minutes so I could speak with some of the relevant individuals.

The Chair: Absolutely. The meeting is now suspended for two minutes.

• (1240) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1243)

The Chair: I'll give a 30-second warning to everybody so we can stay on track with our first committee on justice and human rights.

Mr. Virani, you asked for the suspension. Have you come back with clarity?

Mr. Arif Virani: Yes. I'm happy to proceed with voting on Mr. Moore's motion as it stands.

Thank you very much for the indulgence.

The Chair: Thanks so much for that, Mr. Virani.

Mr. Moore, is there anything else that you would like to say in closing?

Hon. Rob Moore: No, that's great. Thanks.

The Chair: So, are we doing a recorded vote or would we just unanimously agree? Does anybody want to indicate?

Mr. Rob Moore: We could save time if everyone agrees.

The Chair: Do we all agree, folks?

• (1245)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I agree.

The Chair: It looks as though we're all in agreement. That's wonderful.

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

The Chair: Thank you so much, Mr. Moore, for putting that forward.

I'm going to call for any other committee business that anybody would like to propose.

Mr. Maloney, I see your hand raised.

Mr. James Maloney: Sorry, I didn't take my hand down.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Sangha.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to move a motion regarding neglect of seniors by caregivers, and elder abuse. Am I permitted to move a motion now? Can I read it?

The Chair: I think we are in committee business, so you are absolutely within your rights to move forward with that motion. Would you like to read it out for everybody, please?

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Thank you, Chair.

I move, "That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee study the issue of elder abuse including the insufficiency of current laws in fighting elder abuse...explicitly penalizing those who neglect seniors under their care and how to more effectively combat elder abuse."

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for that, Mr. Sangha.

Does anybody want to speak to this?

Mr. Virani, I see your hand raised.

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I think Mr. Sangha has raised an important point. I think it really reflects some of the learning we've had in the wake of the pandemic that we are all living through right now. This is not something that was a particular focus of the committee in the first go-round, in the first session of this Parliament. The pandemic, as we've experienced it, has taught us a little bit about the vulnerabilities in exposing some of the vulnerabilities of people in the Canadian population. I don't think it's surprising to say that if there's been a particular tragedy, a single tragedy, in respect of how all levels of government have responded, it has been in respect of seniors and elderly people in care, such as in long-term care facilities, be it private facilities, not-for-profit facilities, or entirely public facilities.

I think you saw hallmarks of this when you saw the language that was used in the throne speech following prorogation. Specific commitments were made and announced by the government in respect of seniors—things like national standards for the care of seniors in institutions, in long-term care homes. We are members of the justice committee. We understand jurisdiction and the division of powers perhaps better than others. But it is not lost on us that while the delivery of health care services and the care, in the first instance, is provided by people at the local level who are governed by their provincial authorities, there is nevertheless a role for the federal government to play in imposing and creating and setting out standards and best practices for what that care should look like. Indeed, that's what I've heard from Canadians in terms of my outreach during the pandemic, not only in my riding but around the country.

There was another specific component mentioned in the throne speech. That was simply the commitment announced by the government to address amendments to the Criminal Code with respect to those who would neglect seniors in their care. What that looks like and how that would be done obviously requires some finessing and requires some thought and analysis. I think when you're talking about a Criminal Code amendment with regard to the neglect of seniors, that is right within the purview and the proper scope of what the justice committee does as its bread-and-butter work.

The proposal by Mr. Sangha is a very sound one, I think, insofar as it provides us with an opportunity to undertake a study that will actually help feed into something that has already been identified as a priority, not just by the government but I think likely by all parliamentarians and by all parties, given what we've all experienced from coast to coast to coast in this country, and what we've all observed. I say this with some measure of direct understanding. We know that Ontario was particularly hard hit by this issue—as was Quebec, in fairness. When the armed forces are called in to assist in these homes and they report back, in quite telling and pointed commentary and criticism, about what they observed, we know there's a time to act, and that time is now. Proposing to do a study of this nature will help feed into that important action that I think we as parliamentarians need to be taking at this point in time.

I want to offer my strong support for the motion of Mr. Sangha.

Thank you.

● (1250)

The Chair: Thanks very much for that, Mr. Virani.

I have Mr. Kelloway, Mr. Garrison and then Monsieur Fortin.

Go ahead, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Thanks, Madam Chair.

I really want to thank my colleague for putting this motion forward. In another life, I worked a fair bit with seniors. I worked on putting together a seniors college in Cape Breton and worked at different levels of community development. My work last year on the health committee really opened my eyes to the importance of adhering to values that are inherently Canadian and humanistic—that is, ensuring that we protect and look after our elders, our seniors, from coast to coast to coast.

I really find this motion exceptionally profound in doing that. These are values of ensuring that we look after and protect those who have given our country so much—so much—that we as a committee need to do everything humanly possible to ensure that all steps are taken to prevent elder abuse in any form or fashion.

I really commend and congratulate the member for putting this forward. It has my full support.

The Chair: Thanks very much for your intervention, Mr. Kelloway.

I have Mr. Garrison next on my list.

Go ahead, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I too want to thank Mr. Sangha for bringing this very important issue to the attention of our committee. I am very concerned about conditions in long-term care, particularly in for-profit homes. I think it deserves our consideration.

What I would like to do, though, at this point, is move to refer this motion and any other motions that are tabled today, or put with the chair by Monday at 5 p.m., to the next meeting of our steering committee so that we can examine how to find expeditious ways to deal with this very important question and the other business of the committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks for that, Mr. Garrison.

While I seek clarity on your request, we'll go to Monsieur Fortin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Chair, we are clearly all in favour of the principle to protect seniors, be it in Quebec or elsewhere in Canada. I think that goes without saying, and there is no discussion to be had on that. However, we have to be careful. We are elected for certain areas of jurisdiction, and we cannot exceed them. Our sandbox, if I may put it that way, consists of issues that come under federal jurisdiction.

Mr. Virani was earlier talking about amendments to the Criminal Code. If that's about discussing the possibility of creating some penalty or an amendment to the Criminal Code, we can look into it. However, establishing standards applicable to seniors across the country is a provincial responsibility. It is up to Quebec and each Canadian province to do that. I don't think we can meddle in that area by trying to establish such standards, and you will understand that I will definitely disagree with it.

I don't disagree with having standards to protect our seniors, but that comes under the jurisdiction of Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia and each individual province, and not the federal government.

Respected colleagues, I ask you to be very careful when we discuss those issues. We all love our parents, grandparents and our seniors, and we want to protect them all—that is not the issue—but our work as members is limited to jurisdictions that come under the federal government. We must be careful and respect provinces on this matter.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much for that, Monsieur Fortin.

I now have clarity from “the” MOG, who is our clerk. I call him Mr. MOG because he's the greatest of all time.

My understanding, Mr. Garrison, is that you cannot make a motion to move that debate into the steering committee, because we have the motion presented by Mr. Sangha on the floor currently. It is a substantive motion, and we need to deal with that before we deal with yours. One way we can deal with that is to adjourn debate on Mr. Sangha's motion. Then we can reignite it at our subcommittee and come forward with a decision on how we're going to deal with Mr. Sangha's motion at the next committee meeting.

Is that something we would all be in agreement with? I take Monsieur Fortin's points about just how sensitive this is and his concerns about jurisdiction and how we can move forward. If I have agreement from all of you that this is what to do, then we will

move this conversation to the subcommittee, make determinations and then come back at our next justice meeting to vote on or to determine how to dispose of Mr. Sangha's motion.

Just give me a thumbs-up if you all agree.

Wonderful. That's great.

With that, I see the clock. Our committee time has ended, unfortunately, for the day. We'll be in touch with respect to the subcommittee as well as the next committee.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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