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Thursday, October 8, 2020



Chair: Mr. David Sweet

Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

Thursday, October 8, 2020

• (1100)

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Miriam Burke): Good morning, everyone. I believe we have quorum.

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions and cannot entertain points of order nor participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the official opposition. I am ready to receive motions for the position of chair.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Clerk, I'd like to move that Mr. Sweet be the committee chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Barrett that Mr. Sweet be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any other motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Thank you.

I declare the motion carried and Mr. Sweet duly elected chair of the committee.

I invite Mr. Sweet to take the chair.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Hear, hear!

The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC)): It's interesting to take the chair via video. Thank you very much, colleagues.

As long as you're in agreement, I invite the clerk to go ahead with the election of vice-chairs.

The Clerk: Thank you.

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

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Clerk, I would like to nominate member of Parliament Brenda Shanahan for vice-chair, please.

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

Are there any further motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare Ms. Shanahan duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Congratulations.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

I'm now prepared to receive motions for the election of the second vice-chair.

Ms. Shanahan, you have the floor.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): I nominate Marie-Hélène Gaudreau as second vice-chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. Shanahan that Marie-Hélène Gaudreau be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): I would like to nominate Mr. Angus as second vice-chair.

[*English*]

The Clerk: Since more than one candidate has been nominated, pursuant to the House order of Wednesday, September 23, 2020, any motion received after the initial one shall be taken as notice of motion, and such motions shall be put to the committee seriatim until one is adopted.

[*Translation*]

The motion proposed by Ms. Shanahan that Ms. Gaudreau be elected as second vice-chair of the committee has been received as a motion. The motion proposed by Mr. Fergus that Mr. Angus be elected as second vice-chair of the committee has been received as a notice of motion.

Shall the committee adopt Ms. Shanahan's motion that Ms. Gaudreau be elected as second vice-chair?

Pursuant to the House order of Wednesday, September 23, 2020, I'll now proceed to a recorded division.

• (1105)

[English]

All those in favour that Madame Gaudreau be elected second vice-chair of the committee, please say yea when your name is called, and please say nay if you are not in favour of the motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 8; nays 2)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Madame Gaudreau duly elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

I will now turn the meeting over to the chair.

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): On a point of order, Chair and Clerk.

It's just a small, routine thing.

I noticed that some of my staff didn't get the email. Could the clerk double-check the MP's staff contacts to make sure we all received the proper information?

The Clerk: Yes.

Thank you.

I will.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you.

Sorry, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: That's not a problem.

Please, especially for those who were on the committee previously, if the staff connection in your office is different, I'm certain the clerk would like to know that. That way we'll make sure that both you and your staff get the appropriate information when it's available.

Before I go through some ground rules, colleagues, let me thank you very much for your trust and confidence. I will do everything I can to make sure that, first off, as a collective, we serve Canadian citizens as well as the House of Commons. That's our mandate. As well, I will do everything I can to earn your trust. By doing that, I mean that I will try to make sure that every meeting is very orderly. I don't think any of us are cabinet ministers, so this is the one opportunity we get to actually assert our position and represent our constituents actively. I'm well aware of that. I've chaired two other committees in the past, both veterans affairs and industry. I will do everything I can to make sure your voice is heard, and heard fairly. You have been duly elected by your constituents and you've sworn an oath to the Queen. That is heavy on my mind as my responsibility to make sure you have the opportunity to assert your position and to be fair.

That said, let me go on to some housekeeping things. To ensure an orderly meeting, I'd like to outline a few rules to follow.

Interpretation in this video conference will work very much the way it does in a regular committee meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of "floor" or "English" or "French". As you're speaking, if you plan to alternate from one language to the other, you'll also need to switch the interpretation channel so that it aligns with the language you're speaking. You may want to allow

for a short pause when switching languages to make sure the transition is smooth. Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name.

Of course, colleagues, this is all new for us. Believe me, if I stumble a bit, don't take that as an affront. It's just that it will be different for me to navigate via video rather than live. However, I have to say that one of the challenges I always had as a chair when people were jumping in and out was their name. I can actually see all the names clearly now, so that is one advantage of a video conference that I really appreciate.

Colleagues, when you're ready to speak, you can click on your microphone icon to activate your mike. Just as a reminder, all comments by members should be addressed through the chair. If you need the clerk's help, please go through me as well. That way the clerk doesn't feel pulled to and fro or distracted when we're debating an issue and somebody is asking a question. That goes more to a live meeting, but I know that the clerk will appreciate that.

If a member wishes to intervene on a point of order that's been raised by another member, they should use the "raise hand" function, which I will have to learn myself. This will signal to the chair your interest to speak. In order to do so, you should click on "participants" at the bottom of the screen. When the list pops up, you'll see next to your name that you can click a raised hand. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. That's not only for all of us but also for interpretation.

The use of headsets is strongly encouraged. Should any technical challenges arise—for example, in relation to interpretation or a problem with audio—please advise the chair immediately and the technical team will work to resolve them. They're on the line with us right now. Please note that we may need to suspend during those times to ensure that all members are able to participate fully.

Before we get started, can everyone click on the screen in the top right-hand corner to ensure that you're on the gallery view? With this view, you should be able to see all participants in a grid view. It will ensure that all video participants can see one another.

If the committee wishes, we will now proceed to routine motions. Is it agreed that we will proceed to routine motions?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay.

Colleagues, you should have in front of you a copy of the routine motions that the clerk sent out. I will go through them one at a time. As I said, if there are any interventions, I will do my best to make sure I'm treating everyone fairly as the electronic hands come up.

• (1110)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): I have a question, Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I see that we have a number of hands that come up before the routine proceedings issue comes. I'm not sure if they have to do with routine proceedings, but if we have questions about routine proceedings, do we have to wait until all of those other hands are dealt with, or can we intervene specifically on the routine proceedings motion?

The Chair: Let me check first.

By the way, there's a little bit of delay because I'm getting texted the speakers list rather than having it passed to me as would normally be the case at committee. Now that I have it, let me see what these issues are about, Mr. Angus, and then we'll move forward on that.

Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know that we've done a good job since the start of the meeting. In terms of routine proceedings, I'll be moving a motion. I want to make sure that we'll have time to address it. I raised my hand so that, during this meeting, I can move a motion when the time comes to do so.

[*English*]

The Chair: Understood. Thank you, Madame Gaudreau.

Ms. Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I don't know if it's a point of order but I just want to bring up an issue about the routine motions. Is it not a custom that a sitting member would read out the routine motions? If that is the case, I know that Mr. Fergus is prepared to do so.

The Chair: That is a new one to me, but I have no problem if the committee would like one of the committee members to read out the motions. I am entirely fine with that.

Let me just go to the others who have put up their hands. Let me deal with those and then we'll go back to the committee's wishes with regard to Mr. Fergus and the motions.

Next is Mr. Fergus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Chair, I want to begin by congratulating you on your appointment. I'm pleased to see you chair this committee.

I just wanted to address the issue raised by Ms. Shanahan.

You can also do so, but I'm more than willing to move the routine motions that establish the rules of the game.

• (1115)

[*English*]

The Chair: Full disclosure for the committee: Mr. Fergus and I took one of the most majestic jogs ever in the history of individuals along the Thames in London, so I am obviously favourably disposed to his reading the routine motions.

Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: That's a tough act to follow, Mr. Chair.

My hand was raised for the same reason as Ms. Gaudreau's, that following the routine motions, I would like to move a motion.

The Chair: Okay. Well, I see this is going to be a very efficient committee.

Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Congratulations, Chair, and congratulations to the two vice-chairs as well.

I raised my hand to ask a question. I also have a motion that I would like to move after the discussion on the routine motions, but I thought the rule was, as you indicated, that we would have to raise our hands to do so.

I wonder if that is still the case. When we are raising hands to move a motion, when would be the starting point for that, or can we just hop in any time to raise our hand to move a motion?

The Chair: Right now Ms. Gaudreau as well as Mr. Barrett and, of course, you have indicated that you want to raise motions. That is the order in which I have them here, based on when hands were raised, which the clerk has indicated to me. I am certainly fine to go ahead with that order after we have completed the routine motions.

We'll go back to Ms. Shanahan now.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair.

I would like to add my name to the list to raise a motion after the routine motions.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

I'm going to rely on the clerk for that because now we are getting quite backed up on that. Now there are four who have indicated that they want to raise a motion.

We go now to Ms. Lattanzio.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Congratulation to you, as well as to the two ladies on being nominated as vice-chairs this morning.

I want to signal my intent to also present a motion this morning.

The Chair: Okay, that's five motions we have that will be asked for.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I put my hand up because I thought we would deal with motions after routine motions, but I want to be on the list for motions.

The Chair: That's agreed, Mr. Angus. You'll be on that list as well, then.

If it pleases the committee, I think it would be excellent to have Mr. Fergus read out each routine motion. Then I will go to you, the members of the committee, in order to see if it's acceptable or needs to be amended.

Mr. Dong, I see that you have your hand up. Go ahead.

Mr. Han Dong: Yes. I want to provide a suggestion to the committee.

I can see that quite a few of my colleagues want to move a motion right after the routine motions. Would it be possible, just out of fairness, to maybe have Madame Gaudreau, who raised her hand first, and then maybe have a member from another party do a second one and then go back to the order? That way, we don't have two members from the same party moving the motion right after that.

The Chair: Again, Mr. Dong, I'm a servant of the committee and I will always be that.

That said, I normally recognize individuals in the committee, not parties. That goes back to my logic at the beginning that this is the one time you have as an independent member of Parliament to assert your position. I think there will be people who have motions that will be of their own interest and some that will be of their party's interests.

I'm certainly at the disposal of the committee. If you'd prefer that I move from one party to the other throughout the motions, I'm certain that the clerk and I can manage that between us. Again, I want to respect all of you as individuals.

If there's no objection to proceeding as people mentioned their motions, then I will go to Mr. Ferguson, and we can begin the routine motions.

Mr. Ferguson.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Ferguson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Once again, congratulations.

I want to tell all my colleagues, especially my male colleagues, that Mr. Sweet wears a bow tie every Friday. I wear one on Thursdays. I encourage you all to start a new tradition by wearing a bow tie in the House of Commons at least once a week.

I'll now move the motions. The first motion concerns the analyst services. The motion reads as follows:

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.

• (1120)

[*English*]

The Chair: All agreed?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Ferguson: Madam Clerk, should I continue or are you appointing the analysts immediately? What's the tradition?

[*English*]

The Clerk: If there's no objection, then we can go on consensus if the committee wishes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Ferguson: Okay.

The second motion concerns the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure:

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

[*English*]

The Chair: I'll speak up on this one, colleagues. It's been my experience that oftentimes we have a subcommittee, and because we work independently—again, to go back to the first principle I mentioned—the subcommittee meets and we have to go through a whole business meeting anyway.

Again, I am at your disposal, but it's been my experience in committees that if we do a collective business meeting, then everybody has their voice at that time, we don't have to rewrite anything that the subcommittee has done and we can continue on with the business that's dealt with by the majority of the committee. Again, I'll leave that to your decision.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Chair, may I...?

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I've been on multiple committees. Sometimes it's more efficient to have full committee meetings for committee business, because we have to bring something back.

In terms of ethics, I'm fine if we do try a subcommittee to get something that comes forward, but either way, it has to come back to the full committee, so maybe we should just schedule committee business meetings.

I'm open to either way.

The Chair: Ms. Shanahan is next.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Chair, I can see the utility of using the full committee to discuss issues, but can we just keep the option open of having a subcommittee if we're talking about things like scheduling?

The Chair: Sure, absolutely.

Does anybody else want to weigh in on this issue?

Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Chair, I concur that we can reserve the option to use the subcommittee, but I think that by and large, if we can just have a business meeting of the full committee, except when necessary to just have a sub, your proposal is reasonable.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Ferguson.

Mr. Greg Ferguson: I do think, Mr. Chair, that having a subcommittee is very important. Now that we are moving towards hybrid committees—I believe PROC has moved down that line—some discussions are going to become a little bit more stilted and perhaps longer if we have them in the full committee. I do like having a subcommittee for the purpose that it was set up. I think it would actually be a lot more efficient than having these discussions. There's not the same easy back-and-forth as we have had. I would strongly suggest that we use one.

In this new constellation, I think subcommittees are going to become more important than they used to be.

The Chair: Okay.

In a collaborative aspect here, colleagues, do you want to go with a subcommittee right away, or would you like to do business and have...? It would just mean that we would amend this motion by saying that the committee has the option of using a subcommittee for future agendas. I'll leave that to you.

It looks like Mr. Sorbara has a point as well.

• (1125)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: I'd like to concur with MP Shanahan on this point. I think we can keep the option, Chair, in terms of what you said. If we can keep both options, that would be great.

We're now in this virtual world of committees again. Having full flexibility and working in a spirit of collaboration among all MPs and among all parties, I think, is the best way to go.

It's nice to have the full committee discuss the business and get all of the information out there so that we all understand what's going on, especially because most of us will not be in Ottawa during this time. I think it lends itself well to building some camaraderie among us as well.

The Chair: Okay, colleagues, is there some consensus that we'll go ahead with business in the full committee, with the option of a subcommittee, or do we need to go to a vote?

I try to do consensus as much as I can, but if we need to go to a vote, we can do that as well.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm fine.

Mr. Greg Fergus: For reasons that I raised earlier, Mr. Chair, I'd prefer a subcommittee. There you go.

The Chair: Would you prefer a vote, then, Mr. Fergus?

Mr. Greg Fergus: No, not a vote. I just think we should keep it on the books. I think we'll quickly discover that there are some things that would be a better use of committee time. As long as we have that flexibility to go to a subcommittee, it's a legitimate tool, and I think it's one that will become increasingly important in this hybrid world.

The Chair: Okay. My suggestion—and of course the clerk can massage the wording—would be that the option remain open for the committee to use a subcommittee on agenda. We'll leave that there so that any time committee members feel we've hit a logjam and we need to use the subcommittee, we can do that at a moment's notice, with somebody just raising the point.

Go ahead, Mrs. Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: It seems to me that the option is already included in the existing wording. That was our usage in the first session. We didn't necessarily have a subcommittee every time, but knew we had that option. I think deciding whether it was better for something to go to a subcommittee or to be discussed in full came about by consensus. I don't see any need to change the wording as it is.

I'm just wondering if maybe the clerk could speak to that. I see she was nodding her head.

The Clerk: Sure, Mr. Chair, if you would like.

Having it in the routine motions means you can use it if you wish, but it doesn't oblige you to use it if the committee doesn't see the need. It is just the fallback to have it there and use it when necessary, but not necessarily.

The Chair: Okay, colleagues, are we agreed that we accept this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Greg Fergus: I like the way the clerk used William Lyon Mackenzie King's formulation.

The Chair: You may continue, Mr. Fergus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The third motion concerns meetings without a quorum. The motion reads as follows:

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 one member of the opposition and one member of the government, but when travelling outside the parliamentary precinct, that the meeting begin after 15 minutes, regardless of members present.

[*English*]

The Chair: Colleagues, is there any debate on that? Do we have agreement on that one?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Fergus, that motion is accepted, and we can move on to the next one.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: The fourth motion concerns the time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses:

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

• (1130)

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm seeing the manual hands-up pretty well, so thank you, colleagues.

Go ahead, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Congratulations, Chair. I'm really looking forward to working with you on this committee.

This motion is different from what was adopted at PROC, and since PROC is the great mother of all the committees, we should be in line with their amendment, which would be, and I would move, that for the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning should be as follows: Conservative Party, five minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes; Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes; New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes; Conservative Party, five minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes.

The Chair: Is there any comment, colleagues?

We are not really bound to PROC or to this motion. We are in control of our own destiny.

Go ahead, Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I believe that we should simply stick to the decision made by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Shanahan.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I understand the situation, especially when it comes to video conference meetings. During these meetings, as a result of interruptions, we may run out of time. I think that it's very important to give everyone the opportunity to ask questions.

I'm moving a friendly amendment to reduce the time for witnesses to give their presentations to, say, seven minutes. I know that these presentations are important. However, we obtain the information that we need by asking our questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for that, Ms. Shanahan.

Go ahead, Mr. Ferguson.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Ferguson: The suggestions made by Ms. Shanahan, Mr. Angus and Ms. Gaudreau align with the decision of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

According to my recollection of the discussion in that committee, witness presentations were five to seven minutes. This would give us all the opportunity to participate in each round and to ask questions. It's also enough time for the witnesses to express their views, as Ms. Shanahan just said.

[*English*]

Le président: Mr. Sorbara is next.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The suggestion to follow PROC is something that I'm in favour with in terms of the precedent there. In terms of cutting the witness time down, my experience in the last six years in sitting on a couple of committees, and quite onerous committees, is that five to seven minutes is plenty of time. I think in today's virtual world, in terms of the time lag, sometimes we need to cut down a little bit in terms

of the witnesses so we can allow all the questioners the time to put their thoughts and ideas forward.

In terms of the second round, we all have plenty of time to ask questions as we move along in this committee. I have no issues with that. I look at this as sort of rearranging the chairs, but the chairs will still all be utilized and everybody will be able to ask their questions to the witnesses and get their thoughts out.

I think we can move forward on that. If we can cut it down to five minutes on the witnesses, that would be perfect.

• (1135)

Le président: As long as we're not moving the chairs on a cruise ship, I'm fine.

Mr. Barrett—

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Not with COVID.

Mr. Michael Barrett: The wording presented by Mr. Angus, based on listening, is consistent with what PROC had said and is the traditional speaking order.

Through you, Mr. Chair, am I correct, Mr. Angus? Was it just the length of time that was amended, or was there also an adjustment to the order in which questions would be asked?

The Chair: Madame Gaudreau is on the list next. With her indulgence, I'll have Mr. Angus respond to that.

Mr. Charlie Angus: We're dealing with two things now. In terms of the order, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party do not get any extra time. It just shifts the order of when we speak.

Madam Shanahan's motion for five to seven minutes is different from the PROC motion, which said five minutes. I certainly support a five-minute to seven-minute variable for our committee, because sometimes we have extraordinarily important people speak and at other times we have a number of people speaking. I prefer Ms. Shanahan's five to seven minutes.

Then in the second round, it is the Conservative Party, five minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes; the Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes; the New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes; the Conservative Party, five minutes; and the Liberal Party, five minutes. Then, of course, the rounds would repeat if we go into the third and fourth rounds.

I figure that this would be pretty much straightforward. If we cut the time down for the speakers, it does give everybody an opportunity.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I concur, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I want to make a few clarifications.

Because we were meeting using Zoom, there were unfortunately several occasions where, in the interest of fairness, the second round did not take place, despite the very good work done by the chairs.

I think that this motion for the second round will ensure a proper level of fairness. I propose that we refrain from repeating the process carried out by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and that we trust this committee. I think that we'll find that not only will we be more effective, but we won't split as much time. We must sometimes stop while witnesses respond. This has happened a number of times.

In the interest of fairness and effectiveness, I support the proposal made by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Angus, do you want to comment further?

Mr. Charlie Angus: No.

The Chair: I sense that there is agreement to go ahead with the reordering of the speaking according to the motion of PROC. Is that agreed?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes.

The Chair: I'll have the clerk make that amendment. We'll accept that routine motion as amended.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: May I continue, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, certainly.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you.

The fifth motion concerns document distribution. The motion reads as follows:

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

[*English*]

The Chair: All agreed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Fergus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: The sixth motion concerns the working meals—I like this—and reads as follows:

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

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Shanahan, do you have a comment?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Chair, I didn't want to interrupt. I just wanted to confirm that the friendly amendment was accepted for the five to seven minutes, back in number four, for presentation time.

• (1140)

The Chair: That is correct, Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Colleagues, are we okay with this motion on working lunches?

Colleagues, also with this pandemic, rather than going into a lot of nuances in the wording, let's just keep it to the discretion of the clerk, because there have been some complications with the parliamentary restaurant, etc.

If you're going to be in Ottawa and you're going to be at the hybrid meeting, then just do your best to notify the clerk. Obviously, if you're calling in on Zoom, then it's pretty tough for us to get a working meal to you anyway. But if you do that, then this motion should suffice for all of our nutritional needs.

Mr. Greg Fergus: I was hoping for delivery at home, Mr. Chair. Drat!

The Chair: What a network we'd need, sir!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Excellent.

[*English*]

The Chair: Please continue, Mr. Fergus. I will assume that the motion on working meals is accepted by the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you.

The seventh motion concerns the travel, accommodation and living expenses of witnesses. The motion reads as follows:

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.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there any questions or comments on this motion?

I suspect, obviously, with this pandemic, that the vast majority of our witnesses will be via Zoom anyway, and that will eliminate any need for expenses.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Fergus. You can continue.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you, sir.

Next is access to in camera meetings:

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 person from each House officer's office be allowed to be present.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, this is one of the changes with a Zoom meeting. I know we always did that with live meetings, but I assume that when we're talking about staff members, they would Zoom in. They're not going to be in the actual hybrid room on the Hill. Is that correct?

The Clerk: I assume that's correct. Still, the question is about how many can actually be present, whether on Zoom or in person.

The Chair: Yes, absolutely. I just wanted to make sure, with regard to health and safety, for future direction.

Are those numbers good for everyone?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: As I said, with regard to health and safety, when we have the hybrid meetings, I know there's always a limit to the number of individuals in the actual committee room, and so we'll have to deal with that on a case-by-case basis. If you're in Ottawa and you're going to be attending and we end up in camera, then most likely your staff will have to Zoom in and not be present in the actual room.

Please proceed, Mr. Ferguson.

[Translation]

Mr. Greg Ferguson: Thank you.

The ninth motion concerns the transcripts of in camera meetings. The motion reads as follows:

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.

[English]

The Chair: I see agreement.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Ferguson, you can continue.

[Translation]

Mr. Greg Ferguson: The tenth motion concerns the notice of motion. The motion reads as follows:

That a 48 hours' notice, interpreted as two nights, shall 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 (1) the notice be filed with the clerk of the committee no later than 4:00 p.m. (EST) from Monday to Friday; that (2) 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 (3) 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.

• (1145)

[English]

The Chair: Are there questions or comments on this one, colleagues?

I see none. Do we have agreement on this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you, colleagues.

Mr. Ferguson, you can continue.

Mr. Greg Ferguson: On other in camera meetings, I move "That the committee may meet in camera only for the following purposes: (a) to consider a draft report; (b) to attend briefings concerning national security; (c) to consider lists of witnesses; (d) for any other reason with the unanimous consent of the committee. That all votes taken in camera, with the exception of votes regarding the consideration of draft reports, be recorded in the minutes of proceedings, in-

cluding how each member voted when recorded votes are requested. That any motion to sit in camera is debatable and amendable."

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

It came up theoretically in the WE study, I believe, in the discussions at the finance committee and hasn't been tested out, but whether or not there may be a time when you want to have an in camera session with a witness who may—

Mr. Greg Ferguson: I'm sorry, but is anybody else having trouble hearing Mr. Angus or is it just my connection?

The Chair: My audio is fine.

Mr. Angus, would you just begin again to make sure Mr. Ferguson can hear you?

Mr. Greg Ferguson: I'm sorry.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

In terms of in camera meetings, it was a hypothetical with the WE study at finance whether or not certain witnesses might provide testimony in camera because of their concerns and our ability to receive that information.

As well, in the last Parliament with the ethics study, we had in camera presentations on key investigations that were going on in other jurisdictions and it was felt that an in camera briefing to our committee allowed us to know what was going on without compromising investigations that were taking place. I'm not sure if the language around this motion covers the ability of a committee to receive extraordinary information in cases where the source needs to be protected as part of an in camera meeting.

The Chair: For some reason I don't have a copy of that motion and I apologize. I have a list here but for some reason I don't have that, so I'll refer to the clerk.

The motion does say that with the agreement of the majority of the committee we would go in camera anyway.

The Clerk: Yes, I don't have that version either but I expect that the committee can agree to go in camera when it chooses.

The Chair: Again, Clerk, it has been a few years.

Generally speaking, a motion to go in camera is a dilatory motion. It is generally not debated, the reason oftentimes being that the safety and security of witnesses in a debate would be compromised while we're debating whether we go in camera. Is that correct?

The Clerk: Generally speaking, an in camera motion is not debatable unless there's a condition attached to it, but if the committee wishes that to be the case, they can do that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fergus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: According to the information that I received, this motion came from the Clerk of the House of Commons. Madam Clerk, I hope that I haven't done anything disrespectful towards the committee.

• (1150)

[*English*]

The Chair: Does everybody else have a copy of this motion?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Which motion are you referring to? I have a copy of the routine motions that were distributed.

The Chair: Mr. Barrett.

The Chair: I'm talking about the motion that Mr. Fergus just read out. It's not on my copy of routine motions nor on the clerk's copy. I can navigate that as long as everybody else has a copy, but you all need to have in front of you a written copy of what was said in order to really make a proper judgment.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): I don't have a copy of that.

The Chair: So, Mr. Fergus—

The Clerk: Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Go ahead, Clerk.

The Clerk: I'm sorry. I'm working to see if I can get us a copy of that—

The Chair: Can we go on to something—

The Clerk: —or he can read it into the record if the committee—

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Yes. Can I just point out—

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Sorbara.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Chair.

Can we have MP Fergus reread the routine motion, the other routine in camera meetings motion he has, and have it read into record, and during that time have the clerk distribute that copy to all the members, please?

The Chair: Absolutely, yes.

Mr. Fergus, we will have you read it into the record and then we will take some time to have the clerk pass it on to us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: I understood that another copy was sent to the clerk. I hope that she received it in both official languages. I want to draw your attention to the second-to-last part, which concerns in camera meetings:

That the committee may meet in camera only for the following purposes:

- (a) to consider a draft report;
- (b) to attend briefings concerning national security;
- (c) to consider lists of witnesses;
- (d) for any other reason, with the unanimous consent of the committee.

That all votes taken in camera, with the exception of votes regarding the consideration of draft reports, be recorded in the minutes of proceedings, including how each member voted when recorded votes are requested;

That any motion to sit in camera is debatable and amendable.

[*English*]

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Chair, in response to what Mr. Angus has proposed, and from rereading the subsequent paragraphs, would his idea not be included in paragraph (d) where we say “for any other reason with the unanimous consent of the committee”?

The Chair: Yes, as long as it's very clear that it would have to be unanimous to do that and not just by a majority.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Correct, but from reading paragraph (d), I'm just suggesting that maybe that question could possibly be included. I understand there's now a question of unanimous consent or majority consent, but I wanted to bring it forward.

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Well, I'm going to make things even more complicated, because what Mr. Fergus read was not what was adopted when we last passed routine motions.

The routine motion that we adopted the last time read:

That any motion to go in camera should be debatable and amendable, and that the committee may only meet in camera for the following purposes: (a) to discuss administrative matters of the committee and witness selection (b) examine draft reports (c) briefings concerning national security and (d) to discuss matters involving an individual's private information; and furthermore, minutes of in camera meetings should reflect on the results of all votes taken by the committee with the exception of votes regarding the consideration of a draft report; including how each member voted when a recorded vote is requested.

That was the language from our last committee meeting dealing with routine motions.

• (1155)

The Chair: All right, colleagues, we have a couple of versions here. I don't have either one in writing at this point.

I'll go to Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I thank my colleague for that clarification. I was looking for that earlier wording as well.

I'd like some clarification as to whether what Mr. Fergus read out encompasses what we did in the last session, as Mr. Angus just read out.

I'll suggest that we maybe have a five-minute pause so that the clerk can take a look at this. I understand there are various versions and emails. We don't always open the right email I guess. I don't know. I'm seeing different versions as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: I apologize. I actually do have that one. It's the second-to-last...where it has “other routine motions”. I do have the version the Mr. Angus mentioned. I don't have the other version with me.

If we want to take a look at both of them, I think we'll have to suspend and wait for the clerk to give us a copy of the one that Mr. Fergus read. Then we can compare and debate them.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Chair, I think the fundamental change we agreed to the last time was that the motion to go in camera should be debatable and amendable, so that we don't have committees interrupted by someone saying that they vote to go in camera, and then we would have to suspend. It has upended discussions before because we then had to vote. What we agreed the last time moved it out from being a dilatory motion to something where the committee agrees to go in camera. That was the fundamental change between what we adopted the last time and what Mr. Fergus has in his motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: Colleagues, we'll suspend for a minute or two. We'll make sure that we have both copies, and then I'll come back and confer with you to see where we want to go with this particular motion.

We are now suspended.

• (1155) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1205)

The Chair: Okay, colleagues, I'm sorry. With video and getting used to all of this stuff, I have to officially un-suspend the meeting.

Wait for a minute, and then, Mr. Sorbara, you can make your point again that you made when were suspended. Give it maybe 10 or 15 seconds and then you can go ahead again.

We are unsususpended.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: If the committee is now unsususpended, I will now speak again.

Thank you, Chair, for travelling with us. I guess you're not the driver but the person who's taking us to where we need to go, the navigator, if I can use that term.

As I said a few seconds ago, the drafting of this routine motion was on the recommendation of the head clerk. This is not a partisan thing in any way. In my understanding, it's to clarify and possibly avoid any unintended consequences in the future when we go in camera.

I think the four points from (a) to (d) incorporate what Mr. Angus was referencing in terms of possible scenarios in which we would have to go in camera and deal with scenarios that may present themselves in this committee. I think this routine motion is quite innocuous, or the point of the routine motions is quite innocuous and pretty self-explanatory.

I think we should adopt it as recommended by the head clerk.

Thank you.

The Chair: To be clear, Mr. Sorbara, and then I'll move on to the next person on the speakers list, the version that you're approving is

the one that Mr. Fergus read or the one that was in the routine motions that we received?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: It's the version that was just received via the clerk, our clerk, and that was exactly the same as the one that Mr. Fergus read.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sorbara, for that clarification.

Now we have Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I'm good. I'll yield my time, thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

Having both of them in writing, I do notice that one does say at the bottom that it is debatable. That was something that wasn't in the previous Standing Orders, so I think what Mr. Fergus has offered is fair. It's just to give the committee the ability to decide if whether or not we go in camera should be a debatable issue, and then when we go in camera, the rest of the matter is totally applicable. I'm fine with it.

The Chair: Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair.

I'm very happy that we've had clarification, because I fully appreciate the importance of going in camera when necessary. I support the motion as just read by Mr. Fergus, which we just received from the clerk. I'm happy to hear that Mr. Angus agrees with the part about it being debatable and that we leave that option for this committee to make that decision at future times.

I think the motion as drafted by the head clerk covers all the bases. I'm in support of it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Shanahan.

I have nobody else on the speakers list, and I sense that there's consensus around the version that Mr. Fergus read and the most recent version, of course, which is the same one the clerk sent to you. Is that correct, everyone?

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

The Chair: Okay, thank you. The clerk will make the amendments and that motion has passed.

Mr. Fergus, does the next motion you're going to read say "Orders of Reference"?

Mr. Greg Fergus: It does.

The Chair: Excellent. Then we're on the same page.

[Translation]

Please continue.

[English]

Mr. Greg Fergus: I always like causing trouble wherever I go, David, as you know. I'm sorry about the confusion for all my colleagues here but I'm glad that we came out on the right side and you know that I wasn't trying to pull a fast one on anyone here.

Other-Orders of Reference from the House Respecting Bills

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...

I'm sorry, I do not have the next page, but I will read it in French, or do you want me to do a quick translation?

• (1210)

[Translation]

(b) suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a) at least 48 hours...

[English]

The Chair: Is that all you have there, Mr. Fergus?

Mr. Greg Fergus: That is all I have.

Am I missing something, Madam Clerk?

The Chair: Yes, you are, Mr. Fergus. There's quite a bit after that.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Oh yes, I see it here electronically. Forgive me.

Oh no, that is all I have on my electronic version. It just stops right there.

The Chair: Okay. The version I have in front of me continues:

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.

Is that what everyone else on the committee has?

Madam Shanahan?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: My document as well has been cut off, but I'd like to hear from the clerk, just to confirm that this is the motion as read, as well as the previous one.

The Clerk: The motion that the chair just read was the motion that was adopted at the first meeting of the last session, with the end part that he read continuing from Mr. Fergus' motion.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: If I could ask another question of the clerk, Chair, are there any other items after that?

The Clerk: Not that I know of, no.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you very much.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Once again, Mr. Chair, just like our running, you carry me home.

The Chair: Well, I think that's an overstatement, but colleagues, do we need to suspend again and make sure that everybody has a consistent copy?

Yes, I see you, Mr. Dong, so even if there's one person.... We'll suspend briefly. Don't worry. I'll remember to unsuspend the next time. We're going to suspend briefly, and we'll make sure that the clerk gets into your P9 account the specific motion we all have in front of us so that we're all agreed on it.

Madam Clerk, as Mr. Sorbara said, now you're the navigator.

• (1210)

(Pause)

• (1215)

The Chair: Colleagues, we will unsuspend now and I will go to the speaking list that I have in front of me.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Sorry, Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Are we finished with the amendments, then, the routine proceedings? Are we done with this?

The Chair: No, not yet, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Okay.

The Chair: We're still on the order of reference from the House respecting bills because it was cut off on Mr. Fergus's copy, so we've just sent the copy to everybody's P9.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Excellent. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Okay. Now that we're unsuspended, we'll go to Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Chair, I was just raising my hand to ask if you could suspend the meeting. Now I've just lowered my hand.

• (1220)

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Angus, I suspect that was what you wanted to clarify. You're on the speaking list here.

Mr. Charlie Angus: The routine proceedings motions are fine with me. I think we can move on.

The Chair: Colleagues, is there a consensus on the motion that was sent to you that we can approve it as a committee?

(Motion agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Excellent.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Now is it my point of order?

The Chair: Well, I have just one more small thing on mine.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Okay. I'll leave it to you.

The Chair: Mr. Fergus, do you have this one last short sentence in regard to webcasting and television?

Mr. Greg Fergus: I'm afraid I do not, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, it's rather a moot point anyway because of the nature of where we're at right now, but I'll read it because I have it in front of me: "That, where practicable and possible, all meetings other than those deemed in camera will be televised or, if not possible, then webcast."

Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thank you, Chair.

Just for clarification, through you to the clerk, I recall that my colleague Mr. Kurek put forth an amendment last time we did these, and I'm just wondering if this is consistent. I feel that the ends he was seeking are achieved with the wording here.

Again, through you, Chair, does this wording achieve the same effect that we were seeking during the previous session? That is, that whenever it's possible it's going to be webcast, and when it's not possible, it's not possible.

The Chair: I think that's what it's saying but I will confer with the clerk to be sure, because I have no history here.

The Clerk: It's true that it's largely dictated by resources rather than motion, but where possible, as the motion says, I can certainly endeavour to have things televised or webcast.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Clerk.

The Chair: All right, colleagues, those are all the routine motions I have in front of me.

We'll now go to those people who have motions. I am going to—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, we are in an unprecedented situation because prorogation interrupted the study that was under way, and as part of that study we had asked for documents from the Speakers' Spotlight regarding the members of the Trudeau family who were paid, but we were never told whether we have those documents. If those documents do exist with the clerk, are we able to access them? We also need to be looking at how we access them virtually, because when we asked for them originally, we were present.

I think we can't let this issue slip, because we had our work interfered with by prorogation and these issues of documents and the security of the documents and how we handle the documents are a top-of-mind issue that we need to address.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

My understanding of procedure is that it happened in the last session, so certainly if the committee would like to bring forward what was done in the last session, then the committee can vote on that and we can bring not only the previous study but the evidence from the last session forward.

Basically the order for obtaining documents would have to be readopted by this committee.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Okay, then we should.

Mr. Han Dong: If I may speak, Chair, are you saying that there should be an official motion for the committee to agree to bring back those documents for collection?

Mr. Han Dong: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: That's correct.

The Chair: Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: That was my question as well. Thank you.

The Chair: Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Since a notice of motion will be filed, I want to tell you, my fellow members, that this creates quite a connection, in line with what we've experienced. I don't know whether there are any other comments. However, I think that now is the time to see how we can restructure our work to ensure efficiency and effectiveness, while making the most of what has been done in the interest of transparency and fairness.

I don't know what the other comments are, but I can see that the clock is ticking. I think that we're extremely effective, and I want us to stay this way.

• (1225)

[*English*]

The Chair: Colleagues, I have two other people on the speakers list, but just for fairness I did have five names of those who wanted to move motions and I'm going to refer to the clerk to see who they were and what order they were in before we went to the routine motions. If that comes up during the motions people desire to make with regard to bringing the study and the request for documents forward, then certainly we can do that during that time. I'll just exhaust these other comments before that, and then we'll get back to that list ASAP.

Mr. Fergus.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Chair, thank you very much. I just want to seek clarification from you or the clerk.

Are we still on a point of order?

The Chair: Well, Mr. Angus had a point of order for clarification, and now I'm just taking comments before I go to the list of people in the order in which they raised their hand as far as motions go. I will give that to you right now: It is Madame Gaudreau, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Dong, Madam Shanahan, Ms. Lattanzio and then Mr. Angus. That's the order I have right now.

Mr. Charlie Angus: On a point of order for a second time—

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: —my understanding from Madame Gaudreau, and I wasn't sure if she was making a statement or a motion, was that she said she wanted to bring forward the continuity of the work that had been done. To me, that is a motion that she is bringing forward to restart the work that previously had been done, so I want to clarify, because if that's the case with Madam Gaudreau, then I think we're actually on her motion.

The Chair: Yes, I'm just exhausting comments now after the routine motions, but I'm going to go back. Madam Gaudreau is the first one on the list, and the last comment, or the last hand up was Mr. Barrett's, so I'm going to go to Mr. Barrett and then directly to Madam Gaudreau. If that's the motion she has, she can move it.

Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I won't get in the way of that, Mr. Chair. I concur with Mr. Angus's and Ms. Gaudreau's comments. She was first on the list to move a motion, so it's over to you, Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Gaudreau.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I want to thank the interpreters.

I want to make sure that I'm on the right track. Mr. Chair, have we reached the point where I can move the motion, or should I continue to explain why we want to restart the work that had previously been done?

[English]

The Chair: You are free to move your motion now.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Okay.

I'm happy to do so now, since we were already wondering about the resumption of work. I want to move a motion that focuses on effectiveness, but that also takes into account the urgent needs arising from the current pandemic and the proposals made over the past few months for how to carry out the work that we were finishing up before the prorogation. My fellow members, you should know that three more motions may be moved in the future. You won't be surprised. I just wanted to give you a heads-up. However, I'll speak to you specifically about the main motion.

First, there will certainly be a provision to prevent conflicts of interest. I intend to move a motion calling for a study during this Parliament to ensure that all federal government policy documents, whether they relate to procurement, contracting, grants or contributions, include a link to prevent conflict of interest.

There will also be a motion regarding the powers of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. This issue was discussed extensively over the summer.

Of course, this will be followed by the motion that I already moved regarding our concern for privacy. The motion has been slightly amended to make it more effective in terms of privacy.

Today's topic is effectiveness. I asked whether usefulness has ever been linked to effectiveness, and I was told that it has. I'm a new member, so I have many questions. However, I also have some recommendations. I'm proposing today that we create a special com-

mittee to examine the design and creation of a Canada student service grant.

Madam Clerk, you received a copy of my motion. I want to read it slowly. Normally, I would have liked to move it afterwards, since it's now formal. We wouldn't have been able to do so before, obviously, not even 48 hours in advance. I'll now read it to you. If there's anything, you can—

• (1230)

The Clerk: Do you want me to distribute the motion to the committee members before you read it?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: No, you can distribute it while I read it, as this will take a few minutes. Thank you very much.

I will begin.

That the committee report to the House the following recommendation: That the committee recommend to the House the creation of a special committee to hold hearings to examine all aspects of the design and creation of the Canada Student Service Grant, including those relating to the study on the review of the safeguards to prevent conflicts of interest in federal government expenditure policies; government spending, WE Charity and the Canada Student Service Grant; the government's decision to select WE Charity, an anglophone organization, to implement the Canada Student Service Grant; and the administration of the Canada Student Service Grant and WE Charity:

There are a few clarifications. This is very clear and precise.

1. That the committee be composed of 11 members, of which five shall be government members, four shall be from the Official Opposition, one shall be from the Bloc Québécois and one from the New Democratic Party;
2. That changes in the membership of the committee shall be effective immediately after notification by the whip has been filed with the Clerk of the House;
3. That membership substitutions be permitted, if required, in the manner provided for in Standing Order 114(2);
4. That the members shall be named by their respective whip by depositing with the Clerk of the House the list of their members to serve on the committee no later than three days following the adoption of this motion by the House;
5. That the Clerk of the House shall convene an organization meeting of the said committee no later than five days following the adoption of this motion by the House;
6. That the committee be chaired by a member of the official opposition;
7. That, notwithstanding Standing Order 106(2), in addition to the Chair, there be one vice-chair from the official opposition, one vice-chair from the Bloc Québécois and one vice-chair from the New Democratic Party;
8. That quorum of the committee be as provided for in Standing Order 118 and that the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four members are present, including one member of the opposition and one member of the government;
9. That the committee be granted all of the powers of a standing committee, as provided in the Standing Orders, as well as the power to travel, accompanied by the necessary staff, inside and outside of Canada;
10. That the committee have the power to authorize video and audio broadcasting of any or all of its proceedings;

11. That the committee continue all of the business of the following committees: the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics; the Standing Committee on Finance; the Standing Committee on Official Languages; and the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates; and that the documents and evidence received by each of these committees be deemed to have been received by the said committee, including the documents provided on Tuesday, August 18, 2020, to the members of the Standing Committee on Finance;

12. That the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, and the Leader of the Government in the House be among the witnesses ordered to appear from time to time as the committee sees fit.

• (1235)

In a few words, can we pursue the main objective of the ethics committee with what we previously submitted and strike a special committee to continue to shed light on this issue? Can we do that, but while not committing all of our time to it, given the situation we are going through? Our constituents are asking us to move forward, as there are urgent issues other than the pandemic. It would be to our credit to manage to do that and to deal with all the motions that will be moved, which are extremely important for our constituents. That would cap off what we started here this summer, before August 13.

Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Chair, on a point of order, Madame Gaudreau did request that the document be distributed to members of the committee. I'm not in receipt of it, so I'm wondering if it's been sent.

I'm just looking at the clerk there. I'll leave that with you.

I'd like to be able to see the document—a very interesting idea—on a special committee to address this issue. I look forward to receiving that.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: From what I know of body language and facial expressions, I suspect that the clerk has sent it, or at least feels that she has.

She's dealing with it right now.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Colleagues, I'll make a practical suggestion here. It's 12:39 p.m. Our conclusion is at 1 p.m.

We've only covered one motion now, from Ms. Gaudreau. I have five people on the speakers list, and I also have four more people who want to present motions.

May I make a suggestion—and, of course, if you're not in agreement then we'll continue on as we are—that we hear all the motions briefly, and then at the next meeting we'll go one at a time in their order and debate each motion.

Let me know if that's something that resonates with you.

• (1240)

The Chair: Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: To your point, I don't want to step on the list of people speaking to that motion, but with respect to your question specifically, if it's possible to address the motion on the floor.... I think if we have the capacity with the clerk and analysts to continue with the meeting until bells, I expect we should be able to get through one or more pieces of business. That would be preferable to me.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: On a point of order, Chair, my understanding is that for a committee to go past the time it is supposed to sit, you require unanimous consent.

Is it the same rule here? Is that the rule for this committee as well?

Clerk, can we get a ruling on that, please?

The Chair: That is correct, Mr. Sorbara.

Okay, I'm going to go through the list of people who have their hands up right now. Let's exhaust that first, and then we'll deal with the 19 minutes we have left.

Mr. Angus.

[Translation]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you for your motion, it's very interesting.

I think we first need to know whether our committee has the power to strike a new committee. [Technical difficulty—Editor] each party's leaders for that plan. So I think the motion is interesting, but I think such a motion can also be moved in the Standing Committee on Finance.

[English]

I am interested in this motion. I'm concerned about a couple of things. Again, I don't know that the ethics committee has the authority to create a special committee, but I think a special committee is where we want to go. I think a special committee will clear up our committees so that we can get to work. Right now we have four committees looking at the WE scandal. My understanding is that at the finance committee there is language that is more inclusive regarding other financial issues, language that would make the committee broader and give it a stronger mandate, so I'm interested in the language of that committee.

I'm concerned that even if we pass the motion today calling on the House to create a special committee, that might take some time. It might take a lot of negotiating. I don't want that to interrupt the work that has been done. I think it's important that we maintain our ability to look at the documents that we received and that if we have to continue with our witness list, we continue with the witness list as it was.

If the member is willing to augment that to say that in the meantime we will continue with our work with the documents, that would then allow the House leaders to look at this. I think it's a very interesting proposal to clear the decks for the four committees that are very occupied with the WE issue, and it allows us to get onto the other issues. As Madame Gaudreau said, there are many issues that are really important, but I would like to know if she is willing to add to it that the committee call for the reintroduction of the documents that we had obtained. Then we can have a separate discussion about how those documents are accessed and we can reintroduce the witness list and carry on until the House leaders come to a decision. For me, that would be the best.

In terms of the difference in language between what the finance committee is discussing and what the Bloc member has brought forward, I think if we bring forward a motion and the finance committee brings forward a motion, the House leaders can negotiate something that maybe all parties can find acceptable.

I'm very interested in this, but I want to make sure that if we have a long time delay while they negotiate, we're still able to finish off or bring forward the work. If the larger committee is created, then with regard to the transfer of documents and the transfer of information from our committee, I'm perfectly content to let this new special committee, for however long it's scheduled, address those outstanding issues.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Go ahead, Ms. Shanahan.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank my colleague Ms. Gaudreau, especially for what she said concerning the important work we have to do here, in the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. We already adopted a few very interesting motions at the beginning of the last session. I am looking forward to seeing whether we could recover them.

I am not aware of all the discussions surrounding the idea of creating a special committee, but to build on what my colleague Mr. Angus said, according to my understanding of committee mandates, it is rather the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs that takes care of this. Committees struck in the past were always created by that committee. So I must vote against this motion, as I don't think it comes under our mandate.

However, I agree with the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics looking into issues of confidentiality and identity fraud, as well as issues surrounding digital technology. I think that is this committee's goal.

● (1245)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Shanahan.

Mr. Fergus is next.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank Ms. Gaudreau for her motion.

I would like to go over three elements.

First, Mr. Angus asked whether the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics had the right to strike a new committee. I don't think so. That power rather belongs to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, even though I think my colleague made a mistake when he said it was the Standing Committee on Finance—and he is confirming this—that has the power to create a new committee to consider those matters.

Second, if we decide to go back in the past and take up the work that was done during the previous session, I assume all the provisions that were adopted and the context established to examine those documents will also be completely re-established as they were before the prorogation. So I would like to get clarifications from the clerk regarding those two elements.

In addition, the idea of having a completely new committee to consider this is not bad. However, I think it is up to parliamentary leaders in the House to negotiate this, as they do for the striking of any other new committee. So, if possible, we will have to put this on hold for the time being and let the discussions continue.

Finally, I must say that I was eager to consider an issue that we raised right after the election. It is an extremely important issue, especially for Black Canadians, aboriginals and racialized people. I'm talking about facial recognition. Ms. Gaudreau, Mr. Angus and I have talked about this at length. We are lucky in our bad luck, as companies have not been working on that lately because everyone needed masks. However, this truce will eventually end, and they will start working on it again.

● (1250)

Studies have shown that people with brown skin and Black people are greatly disadvantaged by that kind of technology. Our room to manoeuvre with regard to this issue is shrinking. As members of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, we have to look at this as soon as possible. If we miss our shot now, industry practices will advance too much and we will never manage to regulate them.

For all those reasons, I like the idea of having negotiations on the striking of any new committee by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Let's allow the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics to do its work. It will have a profound impact on racialized people across Canada, as industry is soon to start developing that new technology again.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fergus. I'm going to go on to the next speaker, but I just wanted to mention a couple of things.

One is that after prorogation, everything that was done in a previous session is nullified. It would require a motion from this committee to bring it forward, whether it was the request for documents or any of the witnesses' testimony.

You are correct in your observation that we can't order a new committee to be initiated. It would have to be the House, but certainly, through a motion, we can make a recommendation to the House in that regard.

Now I'll go to Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair.

It's really difficult to read through this motion, which I received just a few minutes ago, and try to understand the essence of it and do a fair examination of the wording while listening to my colleagues offering their input and their perspectives on this motion, but I tried to make the best of it.

The first thing that comes to my mind is that I agree with my colleagues, MP Fergus and MP Shanahan, about whether or not our committee has the power to create a special committee. I think MP Angus spoke about it too. I've just heard from the chair that we can offer a recommendation.

Just to be clear, I'm a newish member to all of this. If the clerk can clarify or read out the mandate of this committee again so that we can make an apple-to-apple comparison, if that's not too much trouble, I would like the clerk to remind us—or me, at least—of it and read out the mandate of this committee.

Again, this is a very substantial motion. I would need some time to digest it.

After prorogation, we're still right in the middle of COVID. The motion I'm about to bring forward will suggest that the committee study the implications of the new frontier of digital currency. We've seen that during COVID there has been a lot of increased use of on-line services in the financial area and in other areas as well. Coming out of COVID, I think that some of those sectors will be ready to thrive, and Canada usually benefits from the advancement of technology. It shows in our GDP that the technology sector has been at the forefront of it.

I think it's quite urgent to study something that connects not only to Canadians' daily lives and their consumption behaviours, but to international trade as well. We can't lose out. It's highly competitive, and we need to get in front of it in making sure that the privacy of Canadians and Canadian businesses is protected, meanwhile maintaining transparency in these transactions. Because COVID has exposed the priority of those areas, I think our committee owes it to Canadians to start doing some investigations on them, or to at least hear about from witnesses coming from these industries, to provide strong recommendations to the House.

I just need a bit more time to go through this motion to examine it again. At the same time, I hope the clerk can clarify the mandate of the committee with us so that we can compare apples to apples.

Thank you, Chair.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dong.

I want to remind colleagues that we're speaking to Ms. Gaudreau's motion right now. After I exhaust the speakers list, I will certainly have the clerk refer to the mandate of the committee.

However, I don't want to rob any of our committee members who have had their hands up for some time.

Let me read that list to you. It is Mr. Barrett, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Warkentin, Ms. Gaudreau, Ms. Lattanzio and Madam Shanahan.

I'll go to Mr. Barrett now.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Chair, thanks very much.

Again, I appreciate the motion moved by Madame Gaudreau, and we'll take the time to review it.

I've heard from our colleagues that it doesn't seem that there's going to be consensus or success if this motion comes to a vote today. The intent of the motion is laudable. With that said, Chair, I would like to move to adjourn the debate on Madame Gaudreau's motion to a future meeting.

The Chair: There's been a motion to adjourn the debate on this motion.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adjourn debate?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: That being said, then, I have—

Mr. Michael Barrett: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

You made a reference to our adjournment time, and it was verified by the clerk. I took a moment to review adjournment, and this is something that came up during some of our summer sessions with respect to adjournment.

In Bosc and Gagnon, in chapter 20, on page 1099, it says,

The committee Chair cannot adjourn the meeting without the consent of a majority of the members, unless the Chair decides that a case of disorder or misconduct is so serious as to prevent the committee from continuing its work.

Therefore, I withhold my consent to adjourn the meeting at 1 p.m.

The Chair: Understood, Mr. Barrett. You're absolutely correct in regard to the majority of the committee continuing the meeting. We were talking about adjournment. There's a subtle difference, but there is a difference. You are on record in that regard.

Now, I still have a list of speakers here: Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Warkentin, Madam Gaudreau—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, that was to the motion on which we adjourned debate.

The Chair: That's correct, Mr. Barrett. I was just confirming with this speakers list that those people were all lined up for that motion.

Are the names that I mentioned correct? I see they are.

All right. Let me go back to my list.

• (1300)

The Chair: That's correct, Mr. Barrett. You are.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Am I next on your list, Mr. Chair?

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have a point of order. My understanding is that to go past one o'clock, we need unanimous consent. The issue is that I have to prepare for other work with the House.

The Chair: It is my understanding that we have the resources to go past 1 p.m. The only way we can adjourn is with the majority of the committee members saying that they wish an adjournment.

Go ahead, Mr. Fergus.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Chair, I'd like to move that we adjourn the meeting at this time.

The Chair: Give me a moment, colleagues. Then we'll get back to Mr. Fergus's motion.

All right, Mr. Fergus has moved a motion to adjourn. Is there consensus in that regard?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Could we have a recorded vote, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: We will need a recorded vote, Madam Clerk.

• (1305)

The Clerk: I will call the recorded division. All those in favour, please say yea when your name is called. All those opposed, please say nay.

Some hon. members: Yea.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Clerk: The results are five in favour and five against, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: All right, colleagues. My job as the chair would be to maintain the status quo and business as usual, unless there is a resource issue because of the COVID-19 situation we are in.

I have to check with the clerk in that regard. If there is no resource issue, we can continue.

The Clerk: It is confirmed that there are no resource issues.

(Motion negatived [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Okay. The motion has been defeated. We will go to Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I have a motion I'd like to move.

Mr. Han Dong: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Just to clarify—sorry, Mr. Barrett—is the meeting going on until the bells start to ring? I believe there is some preparation I need to do for question period.

The Chair: The meeting will continue on as long as the consent of the committee is maintained, Mr. Dong, and that is by the majority of the committee at the moment. Our adjournment will be at the bells or when there is another action by the committee.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I will request through you, Chair, that the clerk transmit to all members of the committee this motion, which is in both official languages. I'll read it into the record:

That, pursuant to Standing Orders 108(1)(a), an order of the committee do issue to Speakers' Spotlight for a copy of all records pertaining to speaking appearances arranged, since October 14, 2008, for Justin Trudeau, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, Margaret Trudeau and Alexandre Trudeau — including, in respect of

each speaking appearance, an indication of the fee provided, any expenses that were reimbursed and the name of the company, organization, person or entity booking it — which had been originally ordered to be produced on Wednesday, July 22, 2020, by the committee, provided that these documents shall be provided to the clerk within 24 hours of the adoption of this motion; and that the documents be reviewed in camera.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Is this a point of order?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: —I'd like to have clarification on the speakers list. Are there hands raised already, or do we take our hands down and go back on?

The Chair: Right now, I have Mr. Warkentin, and that's all I have on the speakers list for this motion.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I would like to be added to the speakers list.

The Chair: Okay. We have Mr. Angus and Madam Shanahan as well.

Go ahead, Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I know that time is of the essence. I think that Canadians expect us to get a move on. Obviously prorogation shut down the work of this committee, and they would expect us to expeditiously move back to uncovering the truth that so many Canadians are desperate to learn.

I would move that we move to a vote as soon as possible so that we can finalize this before we have other responsibilities.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Angus is next.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'll keep my remarks very short.

It's what I said earlier: Our work was interrupted by the Prime Minister's decision to shut down the work of Parliament, and we have many outstanding issues that need to be addressed. These documents, I believe, have already been obtained. Our committee needs to access those documents.

If we move to a larger committee in which all of these issues are brought together, those documents could be moved over. I can't see that there would be any reason to interfere with a vote that our committee has already taken. We need to access those documents and move on. I say let's move to a vote.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, during the last session when we were speaking about this kind of motion, we moved a motion regarding the in camera treatment of the documents. I'm not able to look at it right now, but I would like to suspend for five minutes, with your permission. If we could suspend for five minutes, we could take a look at whether, if we bring back the work of the previous session, we do so in its entirety. I would look for the concurrence of the other members of the committee.

I think we spoke at length about how important it was for the privacy and confidentiality of these personal documents of individuals who are not members of Parliament, who are family members, to be safeguarded in every respect. I think that all members here—those who were with us in the last session and new members here now—can appreciate that it is not the place of this committee to expose people for no other reason than that they happen to be related or otherwise connected.

I think we saw that the code is connected with members of Parliament. I think we saw in the code of ethics, as well, a very particular definition about which family members are connected to any investigation. I think it would be very important for us to look at all of those parameters, and if it is the will of this committee to bring back the examination of those documents, that it be done as we had agreed to in the last session.

I ask your indulgence to suspend for five minutes so that we could look at those conditions, and perhaps it can be a friendly amendment to the motion at hand.

Thank you, Chair.

• (1310)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Shanahan.

I would like to exhaust the list of the other speakers who have put up their hands. However, I think it's not a leap for me to say that whenever we request documents, we have a legal obligation as a standing committee in regard to those documents. It would be my understanding that we certainly wouldn't want to break any privacy laws or anything in that regard, and a clerk would be looking at them.

I will go to the other—

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I don't want to interrupt other speakers, but I certainly concur with Madame Shanahan. These are very special documents, and we had an arrangement to ensure the protection of them. I think COVID has made it a little more complex, in that many members of Parliament are no longer able to observe personally, so I would agree with suspending for five minutes to see if we can work out the arrangement on this.

We have to ensure that we're doing the right thing with these documents. These documents are very, very important. However, we had an agreement, so I would support the motion to suspend to see if we can come up with a fair way of showing that we are going to treat these documents with care.

The Chair: Is there some consensus in that regard?

I didn't see a lot of heads nodding, so I'm going to go to the next speaker.

Go ahead, Mr. Fergus.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much.

Maybe this might clarify it. I certainly understand the points that Ms. Shanahan brought up. Also, I understand what Mr. Angus has

brought up, but, Mr. Chair—and it's no fault of your own, this being the first meeting in which you're sitting in the chair—we did spend a considerable amount of time on coming to a hard-fought consensus to try to figure out a way, as Mr. Angus and Ms. Shanahan pointed out, for us to respect the privacy of these documents that are being brought up. You quite instinctively and naturally, and with your longer parliamentary experience, raised the issue of that kind of fairness.

Mr. Angus is correct that the situation has changed because of the pandemic. I'm not certain we can give this justice in five minutes if we just proceed straight to a vote with no consideration to figuring out a way to respect the intent of the context that we set around the viewing of those documents in the last Parliament, while still making sure we can bring that work forward and discharge our work properly, and this in the context of a pandemic.

I'm trying to figure out the process if just five minutes won't do it justice. I don't want to delay this. I'm certain Mr. Barrett is thinking, "Ah, he's just looking to delay." I'm actually trying to just figure this out. We need to have some time to figure this out.

Things have been really complexified by the fact that we're working online now. That was precisely the type of argument we made. We didn't want to distribute those documents electronically, because once it's out electronically, it's out. That's the reason we put on such special measures to make sure that we were respecting the privacy of the people from whom we requested these documents.

I'm trying to figure out how you find that balance, Mr. Chair. I turn to you and the clerk. All I know is that I bet you dollars to doughnuts that we're not going to figure this out in five minutes. I don't know what we should do here.

An hon. member: Vote.

• (1315)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fergus.

I still have Mr. Sorbara on the speakers list. Please go ahead.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to Mr. Barrett for his motion.

There was a question posed to the clerk. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think you mentioned that we would get the answer from the clerk at some point during this meeting about what the committee can and can't do in terms of recommendations and basically what the role or mandate of the committee is.

As a new member of the committee, I would ask if we can get that answer. If I can ask for it now, I'd like to have that answer now. I would like to know, as a new member of the committee, what the mandate of this committee is.

The Chair: Well, Mr. Sorbara, we can recommend anything as a standing committee. We are masters of our own destiny in that regard.

I think there may be a paragraph on what our mandate is. I can certainly have the clerk read that out, now that we've had a couple of suggestions, unless there's some objection to that.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have an objection.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: If people show up at a committee and don't know what the committee is for, I don't think we should be taking up valuable time to update them and educate them. Their job is to be prepared.

We have a very important issue to deal with. I think we should deal with the issue and try to find a solution if a solution is possible.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Chair, my question was not in reference to whether a certain member had done or not done their homework prior to coming to committee. My question was about a motion for the committee to look at setting up a committee, a special committee, and whether that was in the purview of the role and mandate of the committee, which is not in itself a small matter.

The Chair: Mr. Sorbara—

Mr. Han Dong: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, sure. Just let me finish speaking, and I'll certainly recognize you.

We're circulating the mandate now—thank you very much, Clerk—to everyone via their P9 accounts, but I will reassert that any committee can recommend anything they like, whether it's within the purview of the mandate or not, as long as there's consensus on the committee to do that.

Do you have a point of order, Mr. Dong?

Mr. Han Dong: Yes. I respectfully disagree with MP Angus' assertion there a bit, because we do have new members on this committee. I remember when I was a new member here, and I tried to understand. It's not a matter of whether or not we've done homework, because we are talking about a continuation of motions, suggestions and decisions made in the previous session, so I think it's only fair to constituents and new members to help them make informed decisions on whether to vote yes or no on various issues. I think it's not a matter of doing homework; it's a matter of respect for members.

Thank you.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: After I presented the motion, Chair, I wasn't afforded the opportunity to speak to it, so just very quickly, being very respectful of your time and members' time, if it pleased all members of the committee that an amendment was made to my motion that any MP or staff member could review the documents in the clerk's office, as opposed to electronic distribution, and if all members were amenable to that, and if this could come to a vote in the next 10 minutes, then I would be pleased to amend my motion to that effect.

Thank you, Chair.

• (1320)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

If I cut you off, you have my sincere apology. I thought you had finished your motion and I went on to discussion.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I always have more to say, Chair.

The Chair: I'm getting that message. Thank you.

Madam Lattanzio, were you motioning that you wanted to say something?

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: I was. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm not speaking to the last amendment made by Mr. Barrett. I just wanted to chime in with my comments as a new member of this committee. I'm all for efficiency and I'm all for moving along, but I think, colleagues, you need to appreciate that there are two new members on this committee.

Decisions were made in the previous mandate of this committee, and discussions and motions took place that I was not a part of. I understand the scope of Mr. Barrett's motion. I have no issue with whatever motions come through this committee, but I think it would be incumbent upon us to give ourselves a chance to look at them and study them.

If I heard correctly, Mr. Barrett moved to adjourn my colleague Gaudreau's motion because it merited time to be studied. There's a consideration here in terms of private individuals, private documents, and I think that it wouldn't be fair to move in such a very quick fashion without giving us the opportunity to look at it, at least from my perspective, and at least get a sense of where all this is coming from and get a little bit of the history behind this motion.

I wasn't privy to any of those conversations. I came prepared today with the motions that I wanted to present, the mandate of this committee. These are the prepared documents that I have. I have no information, no document, that would make me understand or help me in voting on at least the next motion that my colleague, Mr. Barrett, has put on the floor this morning.

For all those reasons, just as my colleague Barrett decided to adjourn debate on my colleague Gaudreau's motion, I would move that we adjourn debate on his motion and give me at least the opportunity to look at it and come prepared to the next committee meeting to take an enlightened decision on his motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Lattanzio.

By the way, there are three of us who are brand new. I'm also brand new, but there's been a motion now to adjourn debate on Mr. Barrett's motion.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adjourn debate?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Could we have a recorded vote, please, Chair?

The Chair: There has been a request for a recorded vote on the motion to adjourn debate on Mr. Barrett's motion, so I'll leave the work to the clerk once more.

Some hon. members: Yea.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Clerk: There are five for and five against, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: As I mentioned earlier, unless there are extenuating circumstances, the chair generally goes with the status quo.

(Motion negatived)

The Chair: The status quo is that the motion is on the floor right now. We will continue.

The next person I have on the list is Mr. Angus.

• (1325)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you—

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Excuse me, Chair. I have a point of order.

The Chair: We have a point of order from Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Could you clarify if are we speaking to the amendment or to the subamendment? What are we speaking to now?

The Chair: I think Mr. Barrett had suggested a friendly amendment to his motion, if that was more palatable, and so I suspected that there was consensus on the committee in that regard, because it was one of the concerns that everybody had voiced. We're presently speaking to the amendment.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Could you clarify the speaking order? I put myself back on the list for that.

The Chair: Okay. You are next.

Go ahead, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

I'm going to try and bring together Madam Shanahan's original concerns, which I think should be very, very important for us to consider.

When we asked for these documents, we did have a major discussion. I'm sorry if new members didn't read up on it, but the major issue was to make sure these documents were handled properly. The agreement was they would be kept in the clerk's office, and I think that remains a very important principle.

What I think is important about Mr. Barrett's friendly amendment is that they would remain in the clerk's office, but because we are now meeting virtually and some members in different parts of the country may not be able to travel, the only people who would be able to see the clerk's documents—and Mr. Barrett may correct me if I'm wrong—is the MP on the committee or their designated staff, a single designated person who would represent the member of Parliament and who would be able to go to the clerk's office.

We've had that in other previous committees. This would then limit access so that we're not actually putting these documents online and we're not sending them out virtually, but for a member of Parliament.... For example, if I can't leave northern Ontario to see the documents, my privilege would be interfered with, but if I designate a particular member of my staff to go, that person could go and see the documents and report back to me. The documents would not be available virtually or put out in public. I think it would show that our whole committee understands the importance of respect of privacy and also of accountability.

That's my understanding of Mr. Barrett's friendly amendment to his motion. If that's it, then I am ready to vote on this so that we can get on and get ready for question period.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I am concerned that in the friendly amendment, the wording is not exact enough. I think that it's the reason that I asked for the suspension earlier and why we asked for the adjournment on this debate. It's because we would like to look at it more carefully.

I was able to find the in camera...the privacy motion that we passed this summer, and I'd like to read that out so people can understand that there was much thought put into this. It was passed by this committee.

It was as follows:

“That, in relation to the motion passed on Wednesday, July 22, 2020, to ensure the privacy and security of this personal information of Canadians, the committee adopt the following procedures for the handling of these documents:

“That the documents not be emailed to Members, staff or anyone else;

“That for the consideration of the documents during in-camera meetings, numbered, paper copies be provided to committee members by the Clerk at the start of any meeting at which they will be considered, and that they be returned to the Clerk at the end of the meeting;

“That no staff and no mobile or electronic devices be allowed for the duration of the in camera meeting;

“That the documents be held in the Clerk's office, and that outside of in-camera committee meetings, Members may only view the documents in the Clerk's office and that no mobile or electronic devices may be in the room when the documents are being reviewed.”

This, I think, shows the thought that went into this, and I understand that we have even the added difficulty, of course, of not all members being able to be here, which is why I would like more thought to be put into this motion and into the subamendment, the amendment to the motion.

I respectfully ask all committee members to keep this in mind. What we do here will affect individuals. I don't think it's the wish of anybody here to inadvertently hurt individuals who, as I said earlier, through no fault of their own, have been brought into this situation.

I don't know how to address the issue of staff. I'd like to understand who that staff would be. Are they bound in the same way that we would be? Do they have "secret" clearance? I think these are serious issues that need to be considered, and likely not just for this motion, but for anything else, for any other committee work where we deal with confidential documents, as we do from time to time.

For that reason, I cannot support the amendment proposed by Mr. Barrett.

Thank you.

• (1330)

The Chair: Mr. Sorbara is next.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to my colleague MP Shanahan for her comments. I'm largely in line with those comments regarding Mr. Barrett's amendment and motion.

I'm trying to understand what has changed between the motion that was brought forward in the summer and the motion now. In the summer motion, staff were, to my understanding, specifically excluded. I'm concerned. I'm very much concerned in terms of the sensitivity of the documents, the sensitive nature of the first motion, which was drafted in the summertime. Now we're going to enlarge that, or at least the proposition is to enlarge that circle. I'm very much concerned.

Obviously I take, with a lot of credence and a lot of value, MP Angus's comments in terms of his rights as an MP being violated or his privilege being violated—excuse me, Charlie, if I use the wrong terms. We obviously know as members of Parliament that we all need to be able to fulfill our jobs, and obviously, just delegating those responsibilities to our staff members is, I believe, not correct. I believe we need to be within the spirit of the motion in the summertime.

To my understanding, the motion is, "That, in relation to the motion passed on Wednesday, July 22, to ensure that the privacy and security of this personal information of Canadians,"—and I re-emphasize it's to ensure the privacy and security of this personal information of Canadians—"the Committee adopt the following procedures for the handling of these documents:

"That the documents not be emailed to Members, staff or anyone else;

"That for the consideration of the documents during in-camera meetings, numbered, paper copies be provided to committee members by the Clerk at the start of any meeting at which they will be considered, and that they be returned to the Clerk at the end of the meeting;

"That no staff and no mobile or electronic devices be allowed for the duration of the in camera meeting".

I'll repeat that again: "That no staff and no mobile or electronic devices be allowed for the duration of the in camera meeting".

Then the motion goes on: "That the documents be held in the Clerk's office, and that outside of in-camera committee meetings, Members may only view the documents in the Clerk's office and that no mobile or electronic devices may be in the room when the documents are being reviewed."

At the time, there was such sensitivity and such importance given to this. I don't know what the vote was for that motion, but I'm anticipating that since this motion passed, it was made with the utmost diligence and judiciousness by the committee members at the time.

I have significant, grave concerns in reference to expanding this list. If there were a leak by a staff member from any party, it would impose significant consequences on the individuals mentioned within these documents, on their privacy or their potential future career opportunities or their financial... It is almost every realm. Not being a lawyer, I cannot even list the grave concerns that can be numbered.

It has come up in prior committee hearings that a leak did occur. We can go back to 2010, December 14, and a former staffer of a Conservative MP. A document was leaked on December 14, 2010—I can read it into the record—by a staffer of former Conservative MP Kelly Block. We know the great work that staffers do day in, day out for us. We know the heavy lifting they do, not only to make us look good but also to inform us, to keep us on schedule. We all understand that, but there has been a situation in the past, unfortunately, where this has occurred. I cannot, in good conscience, have this situation arise again.

I'm really not sure why MP Barrett put forward this suggestion or amendment or motion.

• (1335)

In terms of that, in terms of privilege, obviously, as I say, we are in a unique and extraordinary period of time. We need to ensure that all members' privileges at all times are respected, but this was set up during the summertime, during COVID. It was agreed to by the members of the committee. I don't know why we're veering in any other manner.

Chair, I'll stop in a minute. I have very grave concerns on why the motion was put forward in this manner. Obviously, I cannot support that in any way, if the consequences were that when a staff member were to leak this information....

It gives me very, very, very grave concerns. That responsibility should not be delegated down in terms of the sensitivity of these documents. That's why, going back to the routine motions, we had that section there for going in camera. This obviously pertains to that, and it should be the sole responsibility of the members of Parliament.

I'll now yield the floor to the next speaker, Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's becoming clear that the Liberals don't want these documents released. Of course, we knew that they didn't want them released. The Prime Minister prorogued Parliament, shutting down committees and the investigation just hours before these documents were set to be released to the committee.

It's no surprise that the Liberals don't want them released. The opposition members do want them released to the committee. This is a minority Parliament. Canadians have elected the opposition parties in larger numbers than the government. It is time for the government to end their filibuster and allow for this committee to do its important work of undertaking its review of these documents.

It shouldn't be a surprise to any member of this committee. I am new to this committee, but I read in national newspapers that this committee was considering these documents, that these documents were being prepared, and that they were hours away from being released before the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament. It isn't a surprise to any of us. It's no surprise to any Canadian that we as a committee would be requesting the release of these documents.

I believe it's now time for us to figure out a way to get these documents to committee. I believe the proposal from my colleague Mr. Barrett—and it's been supported by Mr. Angus in these discussions—is that we find a resolution to ensure that we protect the privacy of those individuals by maintaining the documents in the clerk's office, allowing members of this committee, as well as a designated staff member, access to review those documents. As Mr. Sorbara and others have said, we do trust our staff to do good work, and I would expect that we can move forward. We are all responsible adults. We've all served in many capacities, many of us as members of Parliament for a significant period of time. Canadians will find it ridiculous if we can't find some way to get these documents to committee within the next number of hours.

• (1340)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Dong is next.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair.

I remember that there was a great division in opinion the last time this came forward to the committee.

With this, we're setting a precedent. How far are we going to go in terms of relatives and friends? As far as that's concerned, I asked the Clerk of the Privy Council that question, and other experts who came in as witnesses later on. How far we can go is in the legislative guidelines, and this goes for all members thereafter. As a member, it personally feels to me as if there is no line, no boundary in terms of how far this committee will go in calling a member, elected officials, friends and family members.

Anyway, there was a great division on this topic. I remember that the chair had to step in to make a decision.

I agree that Canadians are entitled to information. However, I think that in protecting their fundamental rights and privacy, the committee now is on the hook for accountability in making sure that happens.

We were in a COVID situation then. We're still in a COVID situation. I don't understand why all of a sudden we are going to include designated staff having access to these documents. I don't think there were precedents in the past over how these were leaked. Unfortunately, I don't know if there was any solution or any change of legislation to speak to that. We are entering into another situation, where if this gets leaked, all members of this committee, especially those who agree with this amendment, will be on the hook.

I don't understand the mechanism whereby designated staff will see the document and then transmit the information of this document back to their member without using electronics. If MP Barrett could explain this to me, that would be great. In my view, there's no way in today's world to pass on this information without using electronics. You can use a phone, but is it completely safe?

I don't understand why this amendment has been brought forward. There was great discussion in the past to exclude staff, and now we're including staff. Perhaps someone can explain that to me.

Michael is laughing. Maybe he has a good explanation. I'm looking forward to hearing from him.

The Chair: Mr. Fergus is next.

Before you begin, to clarify—because I know some people are concerned about whether I have their name on the list—we have Mr. Fergus, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Angus, Madam Lattanzio and Madam Shanahan. That's the order I have right now.

Sorry, Mr. Fergus. Go right ahead.

Mr. Greg Fergus: There's no problem at all, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to be very clear. I think some very good points were raised, but I'd like to respond, particularly to what Mr. Warkentin said. I'm glad Mr. Warkentin followed the news over the summer and read the national news on this. I would also hope and assume that he followed the debate that we had at the ethics committee. We had a long discussion about this. It wasn't the will of just one party. It was the will of the majority of the members of the committee to put a framework around the in camera aspect of this.

This was done for extraordinary reasons. Why? The debate really centred around the notion of who investigates the investigators. In other words, who gets to do it? Should MPs be investigating other MPs and their families, and by extension their friends and all that kind of stuff? The answer was no, we have an Ethics Commissioner who does that. If members feel that the Ethics Commissioner doesn't have full access, then that's the reason we approved this motion. We said, "All right, the original idea was that all this information was going to go to the Ethics Commissioner, just as a clearing house through the clerk; therefore, we're not really investigating each other." There was some concern that members wanted to see this information, so then we put some limits around that.

This was the will of the committee, not the will of one party. The idea was, with this information.... We developed this on July 22, not very long ago, under the same conditions in which we find ourselves now in terms of having a hybrid Parliament. It's in the sense that, with COVID, which was happening, we said, "All right. We're going to leave this to make sure that members can take a look at this, but it will be kept at the clerk's office. We're going to try to limit the number of people on this so that we don't put anyone, our staffers or anyone whom we designate, in a compromised position in case the information ends up being released." That is the reason that we put those conditions in place. It was the will of the committee to do that.

It was, I think, the best thing to do under the circumstances. Nothing else has changed. There's no other material factor that has changed in terms of the ability of members to get to Ottawa.

I know we all have different weeks of House duties. We were talking about this off camera before this meeting started, about all of us being required to come to Ottawa from time to time to do our duty in the House; otherwise, we would be participating online. Well, I think that, as part of that duty, that's exactly what will happen.

You're not getting any opposition from me or from my colleagues in the Liberal Party to bringing forward this information. We're saying, "Fine, but bring it forward under the same conditions that we established back in July." Given that nothing has changed in our circumstances, that should still apply.

I've known Chris for a long time. I'd like to consider him a friend, but I didn't appreciate the tone in which he suggested that this was a partisan issue. It wasn't. I think this committee has done very well in making sure that we want to support the work that's being done.

We all know that there are discussions going on about how we can take this off the ethics committee's plate and put it onto a special committee's plate so that we can go on and do the important work we set out to do back in February, which we know is time-limited.

Mr. Barrett, I think we would come to a quick agreement if you were to bring forward the same conditions that we adopted so that members of the committee can examine those documents. Bring forward those same conditions that we had back on July 22, and we're done; we can move on to other issues. We know that the same material will be brought forward and the same conditions in which they would be applied would be brought forward, and we would be able to discharge our duties as members of this committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1345)

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we go to Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thanks, Chair. There was a lot said there.

We've gone back in our time machine to 2010 to find an incident of a staff member leaking a document. I don't know; maybe they got fired, maybe they didn't.

Mrs. Shanahan asked about secret clearance. None of my staff have security clearance. I don't think there's a provision for MPs' staff to have security clearance, nor are MPs cleared, unless it's a requirement. I had a top-secret clearance when I served in the military, but it's not current and it's not required. The clearance that we require is the one that we take on the day we officially become members, and that's the oath of office. It's that we "solemnly and sincerely promise and swear that [we] will truly and faithfully, to the best of [our] knowledge, execute the powers and trusts reposed in [us]. So help [us] God." That's the clearance we use. With respect to our staff, they handle all kinds of information from our offices.

In this case, we have members who are not able to come to Ottawa. We have a situation here where people need to put a little water in their wine. This is not the original motion that I put forward in the summer. But some things have changed, folks. Prorogation has happened. When we put this forward at the time, in the summer, there was a second motion. There were restrictions put on it. I'm not creating some kind of structure to allow a leak.

If you like the motion, vote for it. If you don't like the motion, vote against it and propose a different one. Everyone was in a big hurry 50 minutes ago to leave this meeting. Everyone has seen this motion before. Everyone can see it now. The change that I've suggested is eminently reasonable. With respect, how would your staff talk to you? There's never any limiting factor on what we can talk about, for me to be able to call another member of this committee on the phone, having viewed these documents in the clerk's office with them.

Mr. Dong, you and I can attend the clerk's office together, look at them. You go back to your constituency; I go back to my Hill office. We pick up the phone and we talk about it. We're allowed to do that. There's no requirement for use of encrypted devices. This isn't national security. We're talking about an issue of someone's first name and last name, and on what date they attended an event and how much they were paid for it. It's not in my interest to leak any of this. I'm not sure in whose interest it would be.

For members who were in a mad rush to get out of here 50 minutes ago, let's just put our hands down and call the question. You can vote against it.

Mr. Fergus, you talked about the will of the committee. Well, guess what? It's a new session of Parliament. The Liberal Prime Minister prorogued to avoid accountability in dealing with corruption in his government, so now the committee has to take new decisions. Well, based on that, some of those decisions that the committee made before, in a previous session, might be different.

I will slow my pace down because I know in the past I've been asked to be respectful of the good work our interpreters do. My apologies to the interpreters and to my colleagues who are listening through translation services. They offer me the same courtesy when they're speaking.

I'll leave it there. To my colleagues, we can drag this out over a couple of meetings, or we can vote on it today. If the will of the committee is similar to that of the committee from the previous session, then the motion will be defeated. A new motion can be put forward. If it's in the interest of members of this committee to get the information, my goodness, wouldn't it be a pleasant surprise to see a Liberal member of the committee put forward a motion to order the documents from Speakers' Spotlight and have them produced under conditions that they believe are favourable, and then see if members of the opposition vote with them?

I encourage all members that we move swiftly to calling the question.

• (1350)

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: The reason these documents were requested was that under the Conflict of Interest Act and the definitions of “family” and “relatives”, there's also section 5, whereby the Prime Minister needs to have his affairs in order not to be put in a conflict of interest.

These issues matter, because after Mr. Trudeau became Prime Minister, the WE group began to pay his family members an extraordinary amount of money to do work for them, and they initially denied that. They said money wasn't paid. When we asked the charity board head, the former chair of WE Charity, if she had known that the Trudeau family were being paid, she said they were specifically told that the Trudeau family was not being paid. There's a question of the credibility of the information we've had.

When we asked the Kielburgers to clarify why Trudeau family members were being paid when very famous people like Jully Black and Theo Fleury were not being paid, they told us that they were not being paid to do public speaking but to work the corporate events afterwards.

This situation has put the Prime Minister in a conflict of interest. That's why these documents matter. The question is.... If the documents concur with everything we've been told, then that's fine. If the documents contradict what's been said publicly and under oath at committee, then we have a very serious issue.

I would suggest that the simple solution is that we can vote on it right now. I will come to Ottawa to look at the documents, and then I'll talk to my staff about those documents. I would have preferred to avoid having to come in, because of COVID, and to have my staff go, but I will accept the original terms we had for the limiting of the documents if the Liberals will agree to vote now, before two o'clock, so that we can get these documents put into the clerk's hands and we can begin to work.

If Mr. Barrett will withdraw his amendment, Mrs. Shanahan has said she's—

• (1355)

Mr. Michael Barrett: It's withdrawn.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Fergus has said he's ready to go. I don't know about my other Liberal colleagues. They still seem to want to get caught up to speed. If the Liberals are ready to vote, let's do

this. Let's go with the original terms and conditions and let's get this done by 2 p.m. I'm ready to vote.

The Chair: I still have five people on the list, but as one who would always like to pursue consensus, I'll ask if there is any consensus around the proposition from Mr. Angus.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I withdraw my amendment to the motion and consent to the proposal.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Han Dong: I still want to say something to be on the record, Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

I see a lot of shaking heads, so I'll continue.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Okay. As a point of order, then, I would ask Mr. Barrett to put his original motion back on. If the Liberals are not going to show us good faith, why would we withdraw that? If they don't want to agree with this, then I'd say that Mr. Barrett's amendment to allow staff.... The Liberals don't seem to want to work with us.

Mr. Han Dong: Charlie, that's new information for me. I just need to digest it—

Mr. Charlie Angus: How is it new information for you, Mr. Dong? You—

Mr. Han Dong: No, no. You changed your position, saying that you would agree with the amendment.

The Chair: Listen, colleagues. Crosstalk is really tough when you're live, but it's even tougher when you're on a screen. Could we have just one at a time?

There's no withdrawal anyway. You need unanimous consent to withdraw anything.

Right now—

Mr. Han Dong: Chair, can we have a two-minute suspension and then come back to this?

The Chair: I'll tell you what. The analysts and the clerk don't have the same luxury that we have—actually, I don't, either—of walking away. Maybe I will suspend for three minutes, if for no other reason, for nature.

We'll suspend for three minutes.

• (1355)

(Pause)

• (1400)

The Chair: We're un-suspended now.

I'm going back to my list. Madame Lattanzio is next.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In light of the discussions, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the terms that had been agreed to back in July seem to have been in dire contradiction with the amendment my colleague put on the table for us to decide. I'm going to reiterate that it's important that we have a good idea of what has transpired in the past so that we can make decisions that are clear and lucid. It is in no way to stifle the work of this committee; it's to get to work and do the due diligence in our work.

That was the point of my intervention before, and I'm reiterating for the same arguments and not an adjournment of the motion, because I understood that we voted on it. Because of the new information that was read by my colleague Mrs. Shanahan, I think you can appreciate that we, as new members of this committee, are entitled to have all the necessary information so that we can take our responsibilities and make decisions that are clear.

I'm going to propose once again that we adjourn debate on this motion. I understand that what my colleague is also.... In reading very quickly the motion, I see there are a lot of similarities between his motion and my colleague Gaudreau's motion with regard to setting up a new committee. Let us take the time to look at this closely and carefully, so that we can take the proper decision. It is in no way to stifle or impede a colleague from putting forward a motion and not deciding on it. It's to give us an opportunity to examine it properly.

I want to make one more comment in terms of taking our oath of office to not disclose the information that we receive. It is my understanding that staff members do not have that same obligation to take an oath of office. For all those reasons, I'm not prepared to vote on this, or at least not to vote yes on it.

• (1405)

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair.

I, too, am disturbed that we're taking up the time of the ethics committee when we know there are discussions going on about dealing with this very issue—

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mrs. Shanahan, I think you're using the computer microphone and not your earset microphone. I notice no difference whether or not you bring it closer.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Is it better now?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: On a point of order, Chair—

The Chair: Are you getting any feedback from translation that Madame Shanahan can be heard now?

The Clerk: Let me just check with them.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Sorbara.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: On a point of order, Chair, as it is 2:07, I believe we are now into statements by members, and then question period will begin. I believe it is our privilege as members of Parliament to be allowed to attend question period. That supersedes the duty we have on committee at this moment in time.

Am I not correct in that, sir?

Mr. Michael Barrett: That's not a point of order.

The Chair: The only reason it's not a point of order is that it's procedurally wrong. The fact is that we're masters of our own destiny, so there's no obligation for us. There is around bells, but there are no bells for QP. No vote is being called, so we can continue.

Madame Shanahan, do you want to try again? We'll check with translation to see if they're able to hear you clearly.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: In fact, Mr. Chair, this is part of my intervention, that for whatever reason, in terms of the resources, we've had some connectivity issues just recently, and now I have a microphone issue. That's interfering with my ability to participate in this committee.

I understand that the work here is important, and I certainly value it. It is for that reason, knowing that there are other conversations going on at this time to deal with this very issue.... In fact, I heard a member earlier in this meeting referring to just that, that the previous work of this committee would not be lost but would simply be turned over to any new entity that was taking up this work. The fact that we agreed to adjourn debate on the motion of Madame Gaudreau, because it was also around the issue of studying these matters on a continued basis...but would it be under a special committee? Is this committee in order to ask for such a committee?

These are all important questions. I'd like to remind members that this is the first meeting. It's certainly not the last. We have an opportunity here to put our motions on the table. That was the suggestion the chair had earlier on. I certainly agree with that. I think that is really the crux of the kind of work we want to continue discussing here.

I understand the concerns of my colleague Mr. Angus. I've heard my other colleagues' concerns around the privacy issues. I think we need to address that in more detail. I think we need to give it due regard. While committees are masters of their own destiny, we still have to act in good faith on behalf of Canadians. I am concerned about that information inadvertently being leaked out; I say that knowing how we are all dealing with technical issues. I think it bears further study. I think it would be more properly done between our various House leaders in the work they're doing in really trying to see how we can make the most of this time that we have before us.

Just as a side note on the technological resources—I'm very mindful of the interpreters, and I'm sorry if I'm not being helpful here—I have ordered additional earphones. I think they're trying to deliver them to me, but I'm not able to take delivery. Physically, this is going to become unmanageable at some point, so I beg the chair's indulgence in allowing us to adjourn debate.

I would request that we adjourn debate on this issue so that we can perhaps move on to placing on notice our other motions.

Thank you, Chair.

• (1410)

The Chair: Just to be clear, Madame Shanahan, did you move a motion to adjourn debate on this issue?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Yes, I have moved a motion to adjourn debate.

The Chair: Mr. Angus, I see your hand up. Is it a point of order?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes, it's just a point of order because it is question period, and I have to be in question period; however, I don't want to go along with Mrs. Shanahan, who has shown to me very bad faith here. She raised her concerns, and now she wants to stall, but we do have to go to question period. We need a vote on being able to go to question period, but I certainly don't agree with the reasons Madame Shanahan has put forward. I think she is stalling deliberately.

The Chair: Let's be clear, colleagues. Are we adjourning debate, or do you want to adjourn the meeting? Can you give me some clarity around that, and then we can move to a vote?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Adjourning debate doesn't adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Charlie Angus: We have to adjourn the meeting.

The Chair: I'll handle the first motion.

Madame Shanahan, did you say you wanted to adjourn the meeting and not the motion?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I agree with what my colleague Mr. Angus said. I would move to adjourn the meeting.

The Chair: Is there a consensus on the vote to adjourn the meeting?

Mr. Michael Barrett: We need to adjourn the meeting and not the motion.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes.

The Chair: That's correct.

If you all have consensus on that.... There was indication around the motion, but the motion on the floor right now is to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, the next time this committee resumes, will this motion be dealt with?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes.

The Chair: That is absolutely correct.

Do I have an agreement to adjourn the meeting?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes.

• (1415)

The Chair: I see all heads nodding yes. I will adjourn the meeting now.

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