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Wednesday, January 29, 2020



Chair

The Honourable Judy A. Sgro

Standing Committee on International Trade

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• (1555)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Christine Lafrance): Welcome to the Standing Committee on International Trade. I'm ready to proceed with the election of the chair. I have a script, which I will follow.

I see a 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, 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 government party. I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): I propose that Judy Sgro be the chair.

The Clerk: Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Ms. Sgro the duly elected chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I'll just take one minute to thank all of you. I very much appreciate this honour. I can assure you that we will be respectful of each other all the time. If we're not, we'll just adjourn the meeting, because I think we need to be respectful of each other. We're all here as elected officials and we have a great opportunity to make a difference in our country.

I thank you for your trust. I'm excited to get started.

Does the committee wish to proceed at this time with the election of the vice-chairs?

Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll start by saying congratulations on your election as chair. I look forward to working with you.

My understanding is that there may be some negotiations happening at PROC or elsewhere about the number of vice-chairs, and that it might be advisable to delay the election of the vice-chairs until next week. I would ask that you test the committee on that question. Thank you.

The Chair: Is everybody in agreement with that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We'll delay the election of the vice-chairs until our meeting on Monday.

Thank you.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Madam Chair, may I move to other motions at this time?

The Chair: Is the committee ready to do some routine motions?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I believe the clerk has received copies for the members.

Madam Chair, I propose the following routine motions, further to discussion among the whips' offices of all parties. I will go through them one by one.

[Translation]

First, regarding the analysts, I propose the following:

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.

• (1600)

[English]

The Chair: Is everyone okay with that?

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): For clarification, are we starting off with the...?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: It's in respect of analysts. If you like, I can repeat it.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Yes, please. I didn't have translation the first time.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: In respect of analysts, I move that this 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 in its work.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: In respect of the creation of a subcommittee on agenda and procedure, I move that the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be established and be composed of five members: the Chair and one member from each party; and that the subcommittee work in a spirit of collaboration.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Can I speak to that?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I'm not going live or die by this, but I know that historically in this committee we've never had a subcommittee. We've just always done things in committee. That way, everybody was involved, and it didn't take away any of the committee time to have a subcommittee meeting. I really don't think we need a subcommittee in this case. I will take the lead from everybody else in the committee. Historically, though, there hasn't been the need for one.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: My experience is similar to Mr. Hoback's, but I've also been on committees that have established a subcommittee. I think it might be useful to establish the subcommittee with this motion, and if the committee chooses not to use the subcommittee for that purpose, then that's a decision that the committee can make later. It might be useful to have it at our disposal, if that's how the committee prefers to work.

The Chair: Are there any further comments?

Mr. Randy Hoback: As you said, I'm okay with what—

The Chair: I think Mr. Blaikie's suggestion is pretty much a compromise. We'll set it up in our structure, and if we use it, we use it. Otherwise, I think Mr. Hoback's point about the committee coming together and deciding the kind of work that we want to do and so on would probably be much more successful and a better use of our time.

Let's have it adopted here so we have it if we need it.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Yes. It's not a hill to die on.

The Chair: We will vote on the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: With the committee's permission, I will read it in French.

As for reduced quorum, I propose the following:

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 (4) 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 fifteen (15) minutes, regardless of members present.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any comment?

Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I have a suggestion to amend the reduced quorum motion to have further reduced quorum: two members of the government and two members of the opposition. Given the nature of the Parliament, it might make sense to ensure that there is an equal representation with respect to the reduced quorum.

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

Are you moving an amendment to the motion on reduced quorum?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Yes.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Chair, the main concern I have with that is that sometimes in the past when the committee has travelled, they've shrunk the committee. Then, all of a sudden you have

to have everybody there, because they've shrunk the committee. I'm concerned about that.

The other thing is that when we do travel, we usually have a motion that we will not entertain motions while we're travelling. I don't see why we need to change it. Why wouldn't we just leave it the way it is? I have a feeling we could get into trouble if we did change it.

• (1605)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Madam Chair. Congratulations, to you, again.

We have already said that when we travel, irrespective of the number of members present, the meeting will start 15 minutes into the meeting time. That way it will not affect Mr. Blaikie's point.

The Chair: Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): I concur fully with Randy.

I don't think there's a need to make any amendments to the motion as proposed.

The Chair: We have an amendment proposed by Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Was it a formal proposal?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: If it's clear that there isn't support for it, I'm happy to withdraw it to save time.

The Chair: Okay. Terrific.

Do we have unanimous consent for Mr. Blaikie to withdraw his proposed amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Amendment withdrawn)

The Chair: This vote is to have reduced quorum as read out by the parliamentary secretary.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Moving on, in respect of the questioning of witnesses I move:

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

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Regarding documents distribution, I propose:

That the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the Committee only when the documents are available in both official languages and that witnesses be advised accordingly.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Very importantly, with respect to working meals, I move:

That the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the Committee and its Subcommittees.

The Chair: I'm sure everybody is in favour of that.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Maybe we can get steak on alternate days.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): No, we should say “healthy meals” with lots of protein.

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Regarding witness expenses, I propose:

That, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses not exceeding two (2) representatives per organization; provided that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: With respect to staff at in camera meetings, I move:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each Committee member be allowed to have one staff member at an in camera meeting and that one additional person from each House officer's office be allowed to be present.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: As for in camera meeting transcripts, I propose:

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

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Finally, Madam Chair, in respect of notice of motions, I move:

That forty-eight (48) hours' notice, interpreted as two (2) 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 p.m. 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.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1610)

The Chair: Can I ask the committee one thing? Would you like, whenever possible, to have our meetings televised or webcast?

Is that the request from everybody? Good.

Mr. Randy Hoback: We have motions with regard to ministers' appearances, independent members' bills and how we deal with other MPs who are not members of the committee. Do you want to look at that?

The Chair: Would you like to move a motion suggesting that?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Yes. They are pretty straightforward.

I'll read the first one on ministers' appearances. I move:

That whenever a minister appears before the Committee, every effort should be made in order for the meeting to be televised.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Yes, that would be fine.

The Chair: Is everybody okay with that?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Randy Hoback: On bills and independent members, I move:

That, in relation to Orders of Reference from the House respecting Bills,

(a) the clerk of the committee shall, upon the committee receiving such an Order of Reference, write to each Member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee to invite those Members to file with the clerk of the committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the Bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the Committee consider;

(b) suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a), at least 48 hours prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill to which the amendments relate shall be deemed to be proposed during the said consideration, provided that the committee may, by motion, vary this deadline in respect of a given Bill; and

(c) during the clause-by-clause consideration of the 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.

The idea behind that is to allow independent members, the Green Party and people like that to bring forward amendments to pieces of legislation here, instead of having to do it in the House of Commons.

The Chair: Mr. Arya, do you have any comments?

Mr. Chandra Arya: I'll let Mr. Hoback explain.

Actually I wanted to have a copy of the motion so I could go through it, but it's okay. That's fine.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I do apologize for that. I should have had one.

The Chair: Mr. Manly.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): I would like to request that this motion be turned down, because before this motion became a regular motion for committees, it's my understanding that independent members were able to put forward amendments up to the report stage. It's onerous on independent members. We don't have the same resources as the official parties do to do research and get amendments written. This would require that amendments be put forward while we're still hearing from expert witnesses.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Unfortunately, history has told us that if we do not deal with these amendments at this location, we end up voting for 24 or 36 hours in the House. The Green Party previously took advantage of the situation and abused the situation. This prevents that from happening.

It will give you the right to have influence on a piece of legislation and it still gives you the ability to make amendments to the legislation. It's just that you're doing it now in committee, instead of tying up the House for 24 or 48 hours. That's why we're asking that this be here.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion? Everyone understands the motion that Mr. Hoback has introduced?

Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I was just going to say that I appreciate the argument being made by my colleague in the Green Party and I'm willing to take the advice of independent members in terms of how they want to be able to present their amendments.

The Chair: Is there no further comment?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Randy Hoback: The last one is on MPs who are not members of the CIIT committee. I move:

That members of Parliament who are not members of a caucus represented on the Committee and who seek the right to speak during the questioning of witnesses must ask a committee member beforehand to share the member's speaking time, and that the committee member inform the Chair before witnesses are questioned that they intend to share their time with the member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee; and that the Chair write to the members of Parliament who are not members of a caucus represented on the committee to inform them of the process.

It was common for us to do this in the last session.

• (1615)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: They have to make a prior arrangement and some other member has to give them the time.

Mr. Randy Hoback: That's correct.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: It's very clear. Thank you.

The Chair: Is everyone okay with that?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Could I invite the analysts to take their seats, please?

Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: While we're on the topic of routine motions, I know that at PROC in the last Parliament and at some other committees there was a motion around going in camera.

I'd like to move, based on that motion, 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) administrative matters of committee, (b) a draft report, and (c) briefings concerning national security; and furthermore, minutes of in camera meetings should reflect the results of all votes taken by the committee while in camera, including how each member voted when a recorded vote was requested.

As I said, this is something that was in place at PROC in the last Parliament, and I understand that some other committees adopted it. It just gives some guidance to the committee in terms of the conditions under which we would go in camera, and it would be useful, I think, to just establish those ground rules at the outset.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I wonder if we could maybe just park this and tie this in to the election of the vice-chairs. I'd just like to look at this a little more closely. I don't have anything for or against it. I would just like to understand it better.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Sure, and if it's useful I could produce that in writing for the committee and perhaps the clerk would be willing to circulate it.

The Chair: If you could distribute it early, it would be helpful, and we'll deal with that item, then, on Monday when we deal with the vice-chairs and whatever else.

Are there any further comments or discussion?

Mr. Randy Hoback: First of all on behalf of the Conservative Party, I want to welcome you to the chair. Sukh scooped me, because I actually had a little speech in which I was going to talk about the great team they have over there and all the competent people, but how there's one person who I think would be really good at the job. I was also maybe going to make the comment that the previous chair used to bring lobster every once in a while and he took really good care of this committee. You have big shoes to fill, because Mr. Eyking was a really good chair and he took really good care of us. We look forward to working with you in a constructive manner. This has always been a committee that 99.9% of the time has been a very hospitable committee. We got along well, we travelled well together and I can't see any reason why that can't continue moving forward.

We look forward to working with all of the parties here and we welcome the Bloc party to the committee, because they weren't here last time. We have some work to do, so we look forward to getting on to doing that work.

The Chair: It should be exciting. It would be really nice if we could get those lobsters by going on a visit.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): It could be a working visit.

The Chair: It would be a working visit, of course, rather than my trying to ship the lobsters up here at some point. We'll have to figure out how we're going to deal with all of that.

Thank you, all. It's exciting for all of us to have a new session and there's lots of work ahead of us.

Thank you all very much. The meeting is adjourned.

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