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Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States

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Tuesday, February 23, 2021

Chair: Mr. Raj Saini



Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States

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• (1835)

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Erica Pereira): Honourable members of the committee, I see that we have a quorum.

First of all, I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can receive motions only for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, entertain points of order or participate in debate.

[*Translation*]

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2) and the motion adopted by the House of Commons on February 16, 2021, the chair must be a member of the government party.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Clerk, I'd like to nominate MP Raj Saini for chair.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Sarai.

It's been moved by Mr. Sarai that Mr. Saini be nominated for the position of chair.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion adopted and Mr. Saini duly elected chair of the committee.

Mr. Saini, I will turn it over to you.

The Chair (Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.)): Thank you very much, everybody.

I'm really excited to be joining this committee. I'm thankful for and humbled by your confidence in me. It's an honour for me to have the opportunity to work with all of you. Some of you I've worked with on other committees.

To strengthen our relationship with our oldest friend and ally, I hope we can do a lot of good work together, unified in our shared Canadian values, and strengthen our economic relationship with the United States.

In this committee I consider us all Canadians, and I look forward to working with all of you as members of team Canada. We shall serve Canadians and our constituents with great ability and confidence.

I now will take any recommendations for vice-chair.

Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Chair, first and foremost, congratulations. I'm very much looking forward to working with you, sir.

Sir, I would put forward MP Mark Strahl as vice-chair of this committee.

The Chair: Are there any other nominations?

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, if I may jump in here, just so members know, pursuant to the motion adopted in the House on February 16, 2021, the committee may elect three vice-chairs, one from the official opposition, one from the Bloc Québécois and one from the New Democratic Party.

We'll proceed in that order.

It has been moved by Mr. Lewis that Mr. Mark Strahl be elected vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, I declare that Mr. Mark Strahl has been elected vice-chair of the committee.

Would you like me to continue with the other vice-chairs?

The Chair: Yes.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Romanado, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): I'd like to nominate Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

The Clerk: Thank you.

It has been moved by Ms. Romanado that Mr. Savard-Tremblay be elected vice-chair of the committee.

[*English*]

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Savard-Tremblay

[*Translation*]

duly elected vice-chair of the committee.

[English]

I'm now prepared to received motions for the vice-chair from the New Democratic Party.

Ms. Bendayan.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Madam Clerk, it is a pleasure and an honour to nominate my colleague, Mr. Blaikie, from the NDP, as vice-chair of this committee.

The Clerk: Thank you.

It's been moved by Ms. Bendayan that Mr. Blaikie be elected as vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare Mr. Blaikie duly elected as vice-chair of the committee.

Mr. Chair, I will turn it back to you.

• (1840)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Bendayan.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

With the permission of the chair I would like to move some routine motions.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you very much.

I will begin with analyst services. I move:

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

The Chair: Is there any debate?

I don't see any.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Here is the motion regarding the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five members, namely the Chair, the three vice-chairs and one other member from the government; and that the Subcommittee work in a spirit of collaboration.

[English]

The Chair: Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Next is the motion regarding meeting without a quorum:

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

The Chair: Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Here is the motion concerning the time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses:

That witnesses be given five minutes for their opening statements; that the Chair be authorized to adjust the time of the opening statement, in consultation with the vice-chairs; 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.

For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning 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.

[English]

The Chair: Is there any debate?

Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to propose that we ensure that every member of the committee is given a chance to ask questions of witnesses before another member is given two opportunities to ask questions. I would propose that we amend the proposal regarding the wording for the second and subsequent rounds as follows: "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".

The times would be the same, but we would ensure that each member of this committee, who are all equal, is given an opportunity to question before any other member is given a second opportunity. I would move that friendly amendment.

The Chair: Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I want to speak to the amendment and state my opposition to it.

I sit on a couple of other committees, and as to departure from the practice that has been adopted at many other committees in this Parliament, I don't see any reason for the departure. I respect that members have an equal voice on the committee, but we also do represent the interests of different parties. Different Canadians have elected those parties to Parliament and they have a responsibility to get those views on the record. That's certainly the spirit in which I undertake those additional two and half minutes. That's why I think the order that I'm accustomed to at other committees ought to stand.

The Chair: Ms. Romanado.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Chair, I'm in agreement with my colleague from the NDP. I chair the INDU committee and I know that often at the end of the second round we run out of time. It's often the NDP and the Bloc historically that would get cut off. I think it's fair to have that sandwiched in between the government and the official opposition party that we have two and a half minutes for the Bloc and two and a half minutes for the NDP to make sure they get a second round.

Thank you.

• (1845)

The Chair: Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Chair, the problem I see—and we've seen this in the trade committee, which I sit on with Mr. Blaikie—as Mrs. Romanado has said, is that you run out of time. The reality is, when you run out of time, both the NDP and the Bloc members have actually had a chance to ask questions for eight and a half minutes before two other members from both parties get a chance to speak.

I recognize that, and that is a reality of COVID and the virtual meetings. In the same breath, there are many instances in which a lot of members don't get a chance to ask questions because of the way it's set up right now.

This way, at least it would be as fair as possible to have as many members as possible ask questions in an orderly fashion, and it still reserves the right for the Bloc and the NDP to have their full eight and a half minutes into their session, which is three and a half minutes more than most of the members, and two minutes more than people who go in the first round.

The Chair: Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, obviously this type of an arrangement favours the Liberal and Conservative members, who have more members and who are able to diversify, but it seems very unfair to the NDP and the Bloc in the sense that what keeps happening in other committees is that the Liberals and Conservatives go and then there is a very limited amount of time. It's true that the last Conservative and Liberal questioners are not there, but our parties have still gotten in two rounds of questions, the same as the NDP and the Bloc. I think it would be unfair to take that third round before theirs.

While I understand and respect the amendment that was brought, I don't think I would support it.

Thanks.

The Chair: Monsieur Savard-Tremblay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): All the committees run smoothly based on a fair procedure. I don't understand why the procedure must be reviewed for this particular committee. That's why I'll also be opposing the amendment.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Chair, as a Conservative, I'm good at math, so I can see how this is going to go.

I would say, though, with respect—and I know we're in camera here—yes, we each represent parties, but we also represent, on our side, 121 members and that is why, quite frankly, if it were all about equality, we'd have the same number of members on the committee as well.

It was an attempt simply to recognize the composition of the House and the ability for... We constantly hear about technical difficulties that chew up time, so I would hope that perhaps a solution

would be that the chair would look to members for latitude to ensure that all members do get a chance, whenever possible, to ask questions because, again, parties are a part of our system, and that's how we all get here, for the most part.

I would simply say that the reason we have more opportunities to ask questions is that we have more members in the House and that is reflected here. I am not trying to start off on a bad note; I am just trying to have us recognize that if you're the fourth member who has put in time from our side and you get bumped by someone else who gets to go for eight and a half minutes, in terms of fairness I recognize that's the way it's been done, but I think the argument can be made for this amendment. However, we'll see how it goes here.

The Chair: Ms. Alleslev.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Chair, I'm wondering if perhaps we could consider also, to mitigate it somewhat, having fewer witnesses at a committee meeting so even though we seem to get bumped for time, etc., everybody would have a better opportunity to actually question the witnesses as well.

I am hoping that will also be something taken into account. While not necessarily germane to this amendment, it does speak to the larger functioning, because, yes, in all of the committees I've been in, at least two members of the Conservative Party in each meeting don't have an opportunity to speak, when the NDP and the Bloc, as has just been noted by our colleague, have had eight minutes.

• (1850)

The Chair: Is there any further debate?

Should we vote on the amendment, then?

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: I consider the amendment adopted.

No, I'm sorry. It is not adopted.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Randy Hoback: That's what I heard. It's the other way around. I love this chair.

The Chair: I apologize. The amendment is not adopted. We will remain with the same motion.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, may I proceed with the routine motions?

The Chair: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

The next one is on document distribution:

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.

The Chair: Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: The next motion concerns working meals.

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: Is there any debate?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: I think they should be delivered by the House of Commons to every single member of Parliament, wherever they may be, whether it's John's cabin or Mark's farm. I think that would be a good idea. Home delivery sounds good.

Randy is smiling. I think he likes it.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): I think DoorDash.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Yes, there you go. Exactly.

The Chair: I don't think this committee has that kind of budget, so I'll just take it that it's been adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. John McKay: We'll take it out of the chair's budget.

The Chair: Continue, Ms. Bendayan.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The next is on travel, accommodation and living expenses of witnesses:

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

The Chair: Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Chair, I have just one point. If we have witnesses coming from outside of Canada—assuming we're all vaccinated and we're post-COVID and that—would this apply to them too?

The Chair: That's a good question. I think we'd have to visit it at that time and make an adjustment. We'll have to see how it goes and how the border turns out at that time. We can always revisit it.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The next motion concerns access to in camera meetings.

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

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: The next one is on transcripts of in camera meetings:

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.

The Chair: Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: The next motion concerns notices of motion.

That 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 time; 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.

● (1855)

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, that was the last motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: I see a couple of hands.

Go ahead, Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: While we're on the subject of routine motions, I know that some committees have made it a practice for the sake of our interpreters to send appropriate headsets and things of that nature to witnesses who are going to be appearing virtually. I'm wondering if we need a motion in order to institute that as our standard practice or whether that's already provided for by the House.

The Chair: Madam Clerk?

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, it is already a standard practice that we would send headsets to witnesses.

The Chair: Did we have a vote on the main motion on the speaking rotation? We had a vote on the amendment, but we didn't have a vote on the main motion.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, we did not.

The Chair: We did not.

Can we do that?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Can we just say that we're in favour of realizing our amendment failed, that we accept that?

The Chair: Sure, that's fine.

Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Okay.

I have an additional routine motion proposal. I would propose that all meetings other than those deemed in camera be televised, or if that is not possible, then webcast.

The Chair: Okay.

Monsieur Savard-Tremblay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Chair, I want to move three motions.

The first concerns the documents translated by the Translation Bureau. It reads as follows:

That all documents submitted for Committee business—

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we need to deal with Mr. Strahl's motion first before we go to any other motions.

The Chair: Mr. Strahl, from what I understand, all meetings are already webcast, but we can have a vote on that motion, if you'd like.

Mr. Mark Strahl: It does say at the beginning, "That all meetings other than those deemed in camera be televised, and if that's not possible, then webcast."

I am asking for televising of our meetings.

The Chair: Can we have a vote, Madam Clerk?

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, would you like to proceed to a recorded vote?

The Chair: Is there any debate on the motion at all?

Does anybody want to make any comments?

Yes, Ms. Romanado.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Obviously in a perfect world we'd have the capacity to televise every committee meeting. We are now at 28 committees, so I'm not sure whether that's even feasible, but I know that if not, often all of the meetings are webcast.

I'm not sure whether we need to just flag that obviously in a perfect world we'd have enough facilities to do this, but we don't have that many rooms. I just wanted to bring it up.

It's not an amendment. I just wanted to bring up that we might not have the capacity to do that, again, depending on when the committee meets as well.

The Chair: Monsieur Savard-Tremblay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I just wanted to save my turn for later. I didn't want to get involved in the current discussion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, we're debating this motion right now. I can come back to you. That's no problem.

Mr. Strahl, do you have another comment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Yes, I'm aware of that, Mr. Chair. That's what I was saying.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Strahl, did you have any other comments?

Mr. Mark Strahl: I think we are mandated to meet during parliamentary break weeks, so perhaps we would have more access to that. Obviously our constituents are very interested in our work and it would be good to have that, recognizing the backup of webcast, which is great. However, it is a separate request for televising that needs to be made.

I would like that to be our normal posture if at all possible, recognizing again, with capacity issues and COVID that it might not always happen. I would like the clerk to always request it, even if it's not always successful.

• (1900)

The Chair: Okay. Is there any other debate?

Are you making a formal motion then, Mr. Strahl, or is this just a general comment?

Mr. Mark Strahl: I would like it added to the routine motions as read.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, we would like to take a vote.

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

The Chair: Are there any other motions or does anyone want to say anything else?

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, I believe you had Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

The Chair: Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: My first motion, which concerns documents translated by the Translation Bureau, reads as follows:

That all documents submitted for Committee business that do not come from a federal department or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau be sent for prior linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members.

You have received the three motions that I'm moving today in both official languages.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any debate on the motion?

Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I just got these as we were considering the routine motions. I understand that we are considering them in most committees. Out of courtesy, I would hope that we would have a chance to consider the full ramifications of this and come back to the committee perhaps at our first meeting to address this. I would want to make sure the rights of all members are protected, even as we try to make sure we are operating within the guidelines.

There will be additional sensitivities, given that we'll be dealing with another country, which in this case is unilingual English. I want some time to consider these three motions together.

I would ask my colleague if we could table this until the next meeting so that we can come back with a more robust commentary on them.

The Chair: Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, do you want to speak to that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I'll see whether most committee members are prepared to vote on this. Let's discuss this and, at worst, if there really is an issue, I'll see. However, I don't understand why we can't discuss this motion when we were able to discuss the other routine motions within a fairly short time frame. I would still like to discuss the motion now.

[*English*]

The Chair: Next is Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, I support Mr. Savard-Tremblay's motion. Basically, it's saying that if the Translation Bureau of the House has not been the one to translate a document first, meaning that some third party has provided it to us, then the Translation Bureau will review it to make sure the translation is okay. We've had issues at other committees where the translation into French, when it's been done by a third party, has not been good.

I totally understand what Mark is saying, but in this case we cannot receive the documents anyway until they have been translated. All this is asking for is to make sure the quality of the translation is okay.

• (1905)

[*Translation*]

I support this motion. We just agreed to a motion moved by Mr. Strahl for which we hadn't even received notice. I don't see why we shouldn't vote on this motion. Several other committees have passed similar motions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Chair, the way I heard Mr. Strahl's argument was in effect a motion to defer for further consideration. That would take precedence over the presentation of the motions, but I would defer to the clerk's view on whether, in fact, that is a motion to defer.

The Clerk: I heard Mr. Strahl asking Mr. Savard-Tremblay if he wouldn't mind. I didn't hear an actual motion moved.

Hon. John McKay: Then the question becomes whether Mr. Strahl wishes to make a motion.

Mr. Mark Strahl: If I don't make a motion to defer, then I will make a motion to amend, because I am concerned that the rights of members be protected.

We say that when something comes from a federal department, we don't require this notice. I would argue that we should add that if it comes from a member or a member's office, we also would take that as a document that can be submitted to this committee.

I think we need to be careful that we don't impact the rights of a member to operate in their official language in a timely manner. Again, recognizing the issue here and not wanting to be insensitive in any way, I simply want to make sure we're not going down a road that will impact the ability of members to conduct business at a future meeting.

Therefore, to Mr. McKay's point, I would formally ask that we table this discussion until the next meeting.

The Chair: Mr. Savard-Tremblay, did you want to talk to that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Perhaps I could speak about the substance of the motion. The motion simply addresses the concerns raised by the Board of Internal Economy. Most committees and their chairs are aware of the difficulties that have arisen in the committees. I think that my three motions make sense and that we can easily consider them right now.

At the start of the meeting, Mr. Strahl said that he wanted more time. In the end, I realize that his mind was already more or less made up, since he wants to move an amendment.

I stand by my motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, I think maybe there's some broken telephone here.

If any of our offices put forward something to the clerk, it still needs to be translated before it can go to the committee. In my office we may do the translation ourselves, but in most offices it goes to the Translation Bureau anyway. I'm not really seeing where the delay is here. All this is saying is that the Translation Bureau needs to see the document before it goes out if it's already been translated by someone else. If it hasn't, the Translation Bureau is going to still need to translate it.

That being said, and having used my argument, Mr. Chair, I would say that Mr. Strahl's motion is a non-debatable motion. We are right now speaking to the substance of the motion. His motion was really supposed to go to a vote right away.

• (1910)

Hon. John McKay: He's right about that.

The Chair: Okay.

Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The motion is that the debate be now adjourned. It would be setting aside Monsieur Savard-Tremblay's motion for a later date.

(Motion negated: nays 7; yeas 4)

The Chair: The motion has been defeated or is it the amendment has been defeated?

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, the motion to adjourn debate has been defeated.

Now you will return to the motion of Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

The Chair: Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Are we voting, Mr. Chair? I just want to make sure.

I'm voting in favour of the motion, of course.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, can I move that we vote on Mr. Savard-Tremblay's motion?

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, Ms. Alleslev has her hand up.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Alleslev.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: I do think there should be an amendment. I'd like to move an amendment that if it does come from our own internal offices or our parliamentary resources, it doesn't need to go through the Translation Bureau in the interest of time. We have the capacity to translate, and we have done that on committees up until this point. We're able to bring motions in both official languages and that hasn't caused issues.

In the interest of time and effectiveness, if it comes from our internal office, the OLO or the Liberal side as well, we don't need to send it to the Translation Bureau. I appreciate the idea of this motion. It makes good sense, because we need a high quality of French.

[*Translation*]

We must have clear and accurate information. That's why we have translation services in Parliament. However, we can translate correspondence in both languages ourselves in our own offices.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Clerk, please go ahead.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, may I verify the wording with Ms. Alleslev? I've written something down, but I want to make sure that it is correct for everybody.

The motion would read, with the amendment, "That all documents submitted for committee business that do not come from a federal department, members' offices, or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau", and then it continues from there.

Is that correct, Ms. Alleslev?

• (1915)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you very much, yes.

The Chair: Mr. Housefather.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I just want to ask Ms. Alleslev a question.

Ms. Alleslev, I agree with the amendment. I think that it's fine. I just want to make sure that the purpose is to enable us to give the committee documents that have already been translated by our offices or by our House leader's office. The documents must always be in both official languages before they're sent to committee members.

What you're saying is that these documents shouldn't go back to the Translation Bureau. Is that right?

Ms. Leona Alleslev: That's exactly what I'm saying. We can provide an opinion and submit documents that have already been translated.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Savard-Tremblay, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I still believe that the Translation Bureau is the right resource. On several occasions, in different committees, I've seen some very bad translations. I stand by my motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any other debate on the amendment?

Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: It is a vote on the amendment of Ms. Alleslev, the addition of "members' offices".

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Do we go back to the main motion now? Okay.

Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I have nothing to add with regard to the main motion. I'm prepared to vote on the issue.

[*English*]

The Clerk: The vote is on the main motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: With your permission, Mr. Chair, I'll move my other two motions. The second motion concerns technical tests for witnesses. It reads as follows:

That the clerk inform each witness who is to appear before the Committee that the House Administration support team must conduct technical tests to check the connectivity and the equipment used to ensure the best possible sound quality; and that the Chair advises the Committee, at the start of each meeting, of any witness who did not perform the required technical tests.

You have received by email the text of the motion in both languages.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any debate on the motion?

Do we need a vote, Madam Clerk?

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, if you have consent, you don't need a recorded vote.

The Chair: Do I have consent?

I believe we have consent, Madam Clerk.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Savard-Tremblay, do you have anything else to present?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: My last motion concerns substantive motions and motions in amendment of a substantive motion in writing in both official languages. It reads as follows:

That the text of any substantive motion or any motion in amendment of a substantive motion be distributed in writing in both official languages to all Committee members before the Committee begins debate on such a motion.

• (1920)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Strahl, I believe I saw your hand first.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I saw Mr. Blaikie.

The Chair: Sorry.

Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much, Mr. Strahl.

[*Translation*]

I just want to clarify one thing.

I don't want us to lose the ability to move motions related to the topic at hand. If we want to move significant motions, it makes sense to submit them in writing before the meeting. However, at a meeting on committee business, for example, sometimes it makes sense to move a motion related to the discussion under way.

Your motion states that amendments must also be submitted in advance. However, amendments are sometimes moved during the discussion. I don't want to limit the ability of committee members to move amendments related to the topic under discussion. This is what concerns me about the motion.

Mr. Savard-Tremblay, could you provide some clarifications that may address this concern? Is this really your intention in moving this motion?

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I totally agree that we must respond in real time.

However, if any committee member were to move an amendment on the spot, for example, nothing would stop us from taking a minute or two to put it in writing.

Of course, we must be ready to respond. I argued earlier that we don't always need notice and that we can still respond on the spot when a motion is moved. The same thing applies here. However, a substantive motion must be introduced in writing, obviously.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Chair, I'm in agreement with many of the concerns that Mr. Blaikie raised. There are times in committee when there may be substantive motions outside of the flow of debate, a matter rising out of witness testimony or something that is heard at the table. There are already requirements to provide 48 hours' notice for those substantive motions.

What we're talking about here is limiting the ability of a member to respond to something that comes up at a committee and either delaying or preventing that member from engaging in the debate in real time. I would think, quite frankly, that this likely violates the privileges of members and their ability to conduct business as is laid out in the procedure manual that we all have.

I think we need to be very careful that, while we are trying to make sure that we are respecting one another, we also respect the rights of members that are laid out and the privileges we each have.

If we get further into this, I would hope that we can just operate in that spirit of co-operation where we're trying to work with one another. However, I don't think we can take away the ability of members to respond to something they hear—either a proposal from any party or in response to something that they hear at the table—and propose a motion. I think that would violate the rights and privileges of members of Parliament.

The Chair: Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, I do very much respect the idea that everything should be bilingual, but I think in this case I agree with Mr. Blaikie and Mr. Strahl. There are a number of concerns I would have to not allow somebody to react immediately, even when we're doing bills on clause-by-clause. While you're supposed to bring amendments beforehand, you're still able, from the table, as a member of the committee, to propose an amendment at the last minute, even to a bill. That's why we have the service of interpreters who are able to interpret everything we say. When we propose a motion or an amendment, they then translate it into the other language.

• (1925)

[*Translation*]

I completely agree with Mr. Savard-Tremblay. If a committee member doesn't fully understand the intent of a motion or amendment, we could take a break and ask our colleagues to help the member better understand the proposal.

However, I think that we should leave the matter in the hands of the chair and the interpreters. I'm afraid that passing this motion will prevent us from carrying out the real work of the committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. McKay.

You're muted, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: The great saying of 2021 will be “you are muted”.

I take the view that this is an unnecessary motion. I haven't seen any example of this being of any difficulty in any committee I've sat on in the last year.

Also, I do take the view as espoused by Mr. Strahl that this may actually impact negatively on the rights of unilingual members who may want to move a motion and can function only in one official language. I think there are plenty of opportunities to address those limitations in the context of a committee.

The Chair: Monsieur Savard-Tremblay.

Monsieur Savard-Tremblay...?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I'm sorry that it took me a long time to respond. The interpretation wasn't finished. What just happened is a good example of the difficulties involved in dealing with real-time interpretation. The system has its limitations. These types of issues have arisen quite often in live meetings.

There are also cases where we can't guarantee that people understand the discussion. Sometimes witnesses don't speak either official language perfectly. I think that, at the very least, we could provide a copy of the documents before we vote on a motion or an amendment. It isn't the end of the world. We can take the time to do this. It doesn't take long to put the proposal in writing and send it to everyone by email. This can be done almost immediately.

Of course, we agree that we must respond in real time. However, I think that we should always have a copy of the document before we vote, so that we can be 110% sure, especially in an era where we vote through Zoom. In several cases, technical difficulties have led to distorted messages. Some of my colleagues couldn't even speak, make themselves heard or get their message across.

For all these reasons, it's necessary to implement this type of measure. Of course, I'm thinking about how to adapt it to make it acceptable to all of you. That's why I would like to replace the words “begins debate” with the word “votes”. Motions or amendments should always be distributed to us in writing, in both official languages, before we vote on them.

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, I just have one question for you.

Now, being a new chair, it's a little different, but whenever I have been on committee and a motion or an amendment has emerged, usually that person tells the clerk in whatever language. The clerk then will write the motion, the motion will be given to the chair, and the chair will repeat the motion or the amendment to the satisfaction of the member. Would you not agree?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Yes.

• (1930)

[*English*]

The Chair: You have interpreters there already, and they're able to interpret the amendment or the motion in real time in front of the member who proposes that amendment or motion. Once that is done, it is read to the chair, and the chair reads it to the whole committee. Usually, at that time, the member will agree or disagree with the wording of the motion. I'm just saying this as a point of information.

Ms. Bendayan.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, I want to make a comment. Since the clerk of our committee is fully bilingual, we could always ask her to reread the amendment or motion, in English and French, before we vote.

Mr. Savard-Tremblay has just moved an amendment to ensure that the texts are distributed in both official languages before the committee members vote. However, the clerk could translate the text orally before the vote.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I still believe that, because of the technical issues that unfortunately plague our era, we aren't out of the woods yet. We were just joking that “you're on mute” was the phrase of 2020 and 2021.

The requirement to send an email isn't a major compromise. If it bothers you that much, don't open it and don't read it. It isn't the end of the world to ask for a written text before voting. I've already amended and watered down my motion, which struck me as common sense to begin with. The motion strikes me as simply a basic principle.

[*English*]

The Chair: Seeing no further debate, we'll vote on the motion.

Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hon. John McKay: I'm sorry again, Mr. Chair.

Did Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay amend the motion?

The Chair: I don't think he amended it. He talked about amending it, but I didn't hear him amend it.

Hon. John McKay: Okay. He talked about it, but he didn't actually formally amend it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Do you want me to read it again with the amendments?

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Okay, so that is an amendment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I was thinking out loud during the debates. I move:

That the text of any substantive motion or any motion in amendment of a substantive motion be distributed in writing in both official languages to all Committee members before the Committee votes on such a motion.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, is that your amended motion?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Yes.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I'm wondering if, as a dry run, we should get that in writing in English before proceeding to a vote.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Of course.

Madam Clerk, could you send it to the committee members?

[English]

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, I can do that, but it will take a moment.

I just want to make sure what the intent of this motion is. Is it to make it the responsibility of the clerk to translate all motions and amendments, or would it be the responsibility of the members?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: As per the first motion we passed, shouldn't it go to the Translation Bureau?

The Chair: Madam Clerk, what is the normal procedure in most committees?

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, I can only speak to the committees I am the clerk of. We do not have this motion. The practice is that debate is free flowing, especially for amendments from the floor.

If members have them in writing in both official languages beforehand, then it's definitely useful, but the clerk is not a certified translator, and I would feel somewhat uncomfortable being put in that position.

• (1935)

The Chair: Can we have a vote on the amendment then?

Mr. Housefather, I'm sorry. I didn't see you.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, I think Mr. Blaikie was making a point when he was saying that the clerk should do this and send it out, to show how difficult this would actually be and how this is not customary.

I don't think Mr. Savard-Tremblay is allowed to amend his own motion. I don't really care one way or the other. I don't think this makes sense.

I will vote against the amendment and then against the motion if you make us vote twice.

The Chair: Mr. Savard-Tremblay, did you want to say something?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: In that case, may I ask my honourable colleague how he would like to amend it so that he finds it acceptable?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I've been a member of Parliament for five years now. I chaired a committee in the previous Parliament, and I've never seen an issue with this.

Remember that we still have interpretation services. Usually when a motion is moved in committee, the interpreters translate it orally. If a member asks for clarifications, a bilingual member or the clerk will translate it. I've never seen any notice in writing provided during committee debates. This would require the clerk to interrupt the meeting to write an email in both languages to the members. I've never seen this and I don't think that it's necessary.

Mr. Savard-Tremblay, I can assure you that, if there's an issue regarding a motion or an amendment in the committee, I'll help you find a solution. However, I must tell you that, as a member of Parliament, I've never seen this before.

Perhaps we could wait and see how things go. Afterwards, if there's an issue, you can tell us and we'll find a solution.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Of course, we'll all be keeping an eye on this. If there's an issue, we'll look at it.

My colleague told us that he has been here for five years and that he has chaired a committee. However, for just under a year now, we've had to deal with extremely special circumstances and technical issues with the Zoom platform.

If, by some miracle, we could meet again in person within a few months, we could amend this motion or even repeal it. We could do what you want with it. However, at this point, there are exceptional circumstances. These circumstances have led to real cases where the meaning of a motion has been distorted. It isn't too much to ask for this, even if only temporarily.

[English]

The Chair: I don't see anyone else's hand up, so are you asking for a vote on your amendment, Mr. Savard-Tremblay?

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Yes.

The Chair: Madam Clerk.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Clerk, is that in order?

I saw you respond with a cue to Mr. Housefather's remark that an amendment to one's own motion was out of order.

I would like the chair to give us some guidance on that.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

My advice would be that it is inadmissible to amend your own motion, but, Mr. Chair, maybe if you seek the unanimous consent of the committee to have the vote on the motion as Mr. Savard-Tremblay has proposed it the second time with the word "vote", then that would be acceptable to all.

The Chair: Do I have unanimous consent?

Mr. Mark Strahl: As long as we're just doing one vote here.

The Chair: Okay, that's fine.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair, I will proceed to a vote on the motion.

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

• (1940)

The Chair: Is there any further business?

Is there anything else, Madam Clerk?

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, I leave it in the hands of the committee.

Mr. Blaikie has his hand up.

The Chair: Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, I wonder if this is the appropriate time to talk a little about the structure of the study, or if the idea was simply to establish the routine motions and move on from there.

If we are going to talk a little about the structure of the study, then I would have some remarks to offer, but if we're deferring that conversation, that is also fine by me.

The Chair: I think we'll be deferring that conversation, Mr. Blaikie.

Do we know when the next meeting is, Madam Clerk?

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, we do not.

At this point, the motion from the House allows the subcommittee to sit during sitting weeks, but the committee as a whole must sit during break weeks.

The Chair: Why don't we sit down and discuss the timing of the next meetings and the subcommittee meeting, and then we can go from there, just to get a little more organized, since this is the first time we're meeting. Is that okay with everybody?

I've only been chair for an hour. I have to think this through.

Hon. John McKay: There's still time to resign if you wish.

The Chair: For the other parties, do people know who is going to be sitting on that subcommittee, so we know that?

Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Well, I think after my surprise nomination as vice-chair, I suspect that I will be working that out.

The Chair: Yes. Sorry.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I just want to make sure, and maybe this goes to Mr. Blaikie's point, that we don't find ourselves missing the first upcoming break week for a meeting and that we end up missing that one because we're doing organizational things. Then we're way down the road, not meeting during that first break week. I don't know what we need to do to ensure that we actually have....

At the next full meeting here, I'm hoping that we're going to hear from our ambassador to the U.S. or Global Affairs officials and that we get some level of agreement that the first meeting during that break week, whenever it occurs, is not another meeting where we're talking to ourselves. Perhaps I can just put that on the record. I'm hopeful that the subcommittee will meet sooner rather than later so that we can meet during the upcoming break week with a substantive meeting and this doesn't simply end up being a....

I know that no one would do it on purpose, but I don't think we want to go down the road where we miss out on opportunities to

talk about something as important as Line 5. We have a mandated deadline to report back to the House.

It looks like I've started something here, but that's my desire, that we proceed with that and we get a substantive meeting during the break week.

The Chair: Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I just want to agree with Mr. Strahl.

Not to prolong the meeting, Mr. Chair, but I was also hoping for agreement from the committee, through you, to invite the Canadian ambassador to the United States to appear before the committee next week, during the break week, so that the clerk could extend the invitation. Hopefully, all the good people on the subcommittee will do great work to schedule our meetings, but I agree that we shouldn't wait for that so that the clerk can get her invitation out.

I would agree with Mr. Strahl's comment about the ambassador. Perhaps we could all agree that she should be invited. I think that's a great idea.

The Chair: Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I don't know who should be more disturbed, Mr. Strahl or Mr. Housefather, but I am agreeing with them both. I think the sooner we move to substance, the more relevant this committee will be. I concur on the invitation being sent immediately to the ambassador so that she can address the larger state of relations between Canada and the U.S. from her perspective.

• (1945)

The Chair: Mrs. Romanado.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Chair, I agree that we should extend an invitation, with the agreement of the committee, to the Canadian ambassador to the United States. Of course, it depends on her availability. If she does not have the required headset, I'm hoping we will have time to get it to her.

As well, given that this is Tuesday evening, the availability of facilities to do a subcommittee meeting might be hard this week. Perhaps we could schedule a subcommittee meeting next week, during a riding week, as well as have the ambassador next week. That allows the subcommittee adequate time to flesh out some plans for us going forward, but we don't lose an opportunity to meet next week.

The Chair: Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I'd like to see two substantive meetings next week. I agree with having the ambassador and government officials at that first meeting. It gives us the lay of the land. It gives us a sense of direction. It gives us a list of items that may be on their agenda that we're not aware of, things that they're dealing with. Once we have that, then we can proceed. I'd like to see two meetings next week. Time is an issue here, and I think we need to get moving on this as quickly as possible.

I understand about the subcommittee, but a lot of committees don't have subcommittees. The committee itself decides when it will have meetings and what it will do. In this case, I just encourage us to get going. I agree with Mr. McKay that the sooner we get going, the more relevant this committee becomes. I think there are more issues we can deal with and be constructive on as we go forward, so the sooner we get going, the better.

The Chair: Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Mr. Chair, I will be brief.

Very little is more important than moving this forward and moving it quickly. We really need to cement this Canada-U.S. relationship. I am very much willing to come to the table, so whatever time the meetings are, I'm ready to go.

I just wanted to let you know that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bendayan.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, I obviously share the views of all the colleagues who have proposed that the ambassador appear as soon as possible at our first substantive meeting of this committee.

Picking up on something Mr. Hoback said, I wonder if the committee would agree that perhaps all members would be in a position to discuss things moving forward, rather than create a separate subcommittee. It certainly worked very well when Mr. Hoback and I had the experience on international trade.

The Chair: That would be the will of the committee, if that's the way the committee feels.

Yes, Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I would just want to ensure that we aren't then using the time of...

I understand how that works, but we don't have the right to meet during sitting weeks. My understanding is that there's no capacity for us to meet.

The planning has to occur somewhere. I would normally say that I'm not looking for another meeting as the vice-chair. However, because of the structure the House provided for this committee, my concern is that we would then be spending our time, during the only time we're allowed to meet, talking about witness lists, the report and so on. By having a subcommittee work on it, perhaps that gives us more flexibility so we can, if there's capacity, engage in some of the work we can't engage in as a committee except in break weeks.

We have four weeks between now and when we're supposed to report, as the House mandated. I just don't want to lose time doing subcommittee work and lose time during sitting weeks, because we're not actually permitted to meet during those times.

That's my only flag to that. I want everyone involved, and from our side they will be, but that's my worry.

The Chair: Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I hesitate to disagree with the inestimable Ms. Bendayan, but my experience has been that a well-motivated subcommittee is a far more efficient use of time, can arrive at wit-

ness lists and set out an agenda for a committee much more efficiently than a full committee can. In a full committee you have 12 different opinions and you have to go through every one of the opinions, because everybody has their opinion until they change their minds, in which case they have two opinions. I would prefer to see a subcommittee.

The same members from the NDP and the Bloc are going to be on the subcommittee, as is Mr. Strahl. It's just up to the Liberals as to who they pick for their representative on the subcommittee.

• (1950)

The Chair: Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to recap what I'm hearing, to make sure I have everything all members have said.

What I'm hearing is that there would be a subcommittee meeting as soon as possible—either this week if I can find a slot or as early as possible during the break week—and that the substantive meetings during the break week should include the ambassador, as well as Global Affairs officials.

Mr. Chair, it might be worth noting as well that the motion adopted by the House has other ministers and officials listed. If the committee agrees, I could start reaching out to them immediately.

Another thing that might be helpful for the committee is for the members to agree to allow the analyst to propose witnesses and perhaps do a bit of a draft work plan that we could then discuss in the subcommittee.

The Chair: Can I make a comment here? I think we've understood that the committee meetings will be Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., from what I understand. I understand there is an interest in getting the ambassador and some GAC officials.

I don't know how quickly we can get a subcommittee this week. Is it possible that next week, on Tuesday afternoon, we could have the steering committee? On Thursday we can try to give at least some time for the GAC officials and the ambassador to appear. After that we could get a more permanent steering committee at a certain time, just because of how rapidly things are moving.

Yes, Ms. Alleslev.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: If we could possibly not have a steering committee meeting in a break week, to the point that was made earlier, the clerk made an excellent point. We already have a list of officials, ambassadors and ministers and we could have two very effective meetings. There's a lot of the lay of the land that we don't know. We could get all of that lay of the land, plus or minus, done in the two meetings next week. We could have an additional meeting, outside of those Tuesday and Thursday meetings, if that's when you want to have the subcommittee, or this week, whichever.

If we could have our two, as you suggested, substantive meetings on the Tuesday and Thursday, at 3:30 until 5:30, with Natural Resources officials, GAC officials, Industry Canada officials, or whomever is available, that might be a more productive use of time.

Again, building on what Mark said, we literally have four break weeks before April 15. If one of those break weeks needs to be taken up with the writing of the report or whatever, that limits us to three. It means one week for officials. That only leaves us two for other witnesses.

I really am concerned about how much we can pack into each one of those meetings, so we don't miss any of the critical information that we obviously are so compelled to prioritize and be able to address.

The Chair: Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: There are some options here.

I think we're all in agreement with having government officials and the ambassador on Tuesday. That's pretty straightforward. That should go forward. The subcommittee can meet this week, or Wednesday, or Monday next week. We can still be in a position to have witnesses in place for Thursday. I strongly encourage to do everything you can to have your subcommittee this week, and find a slot to have that and make that happen.

You pretty well have consent from all parties to have government officials and the ambassador here on Tuesday. Let's aim for that.

If we're looking at Line 5, if that's what has to be done by April 15, we could actually start submitting witnesses for that for Thursday. The subcommittee can still do its planning. The clerks can have a list of witnesses to contact, and start slotting in witnesses in those time slots. If you said Tuesday and Thursday are our time slots, the clerks know that and they can start coordinating witnesses for those Tuesday and Thursday time slots.

The Chair: The only issue is that there may not be enough time this week to schedule a steering committee meeting. From the committees that I've been on, the steering committee has been very helpful, because a lot of stuff gets decided at the steering committee level. It doesn't take away time from the main committee where you have witnesses and you get into the subject matter. A lot of stuff is decided in the steering committee.

Can I work with the clerk over the next few days to figure out how this is going to materialize? I need to know what the scheduling is.

I appreciate the fact that we only have four weeks and there are time limitations. If we're going to do this schematically, we can always start taking witnesses. I think we should have some guidance going forward as to what we are going to do. Initially, next week, we can try to populate the two committees, if possible.

Mr. Strahl.

• (1955)

Mr. Mark Strahl: There are two things I would like to do here.

One would be to move the appropriate motion to give the clerk and the analysts the ability to do the work that the clerk proposed to

populate draft witness lists and to reach out to the officials that we all unanimously voted in favour of calling.

I would offer this, Mr. Chair, if, as you have said, there is time. I would leave that to the whips to confirm. I would try to schedule something for Tuesday, a substantive meeting. Let's give it a go. The ambassador obviously is a busy person, but I am sure we can get specialists from Global Affairs and one of the other ones. Departmental officials should be available to us with a week's notice. There's no excuse for us not to have a meeting. If we wanted to take the back half of that meeting, or the last 30 minutes, to go into a subcommittee, I would be open to that as well to go forward.

We have enough direction given, if we empower the clerk and the analysts to populate those meetings, both of them, to be substantive meetings where we hear from witnesses.

That would be my proposal to you from our side.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I was just going to intervene to say that I appreciated your suggestion, Mr. Chair, and I think we are getting up and going. The dates are what they are in the motion. I think we were all familiar with the parliamentary calendar when the motion was drafted, presented and voted on. We're all familiar with the fact that it does take some time to get a committee up and going, particularly in light of the fact the House resources are already stretched pretty thin with upwards of—what's the number now—26 or 28 committees. I can't quite recall but it's substantial.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: There are 26.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I appreciate everyone's desire, and I share it, to get going on this substantive work. I think we have at least one substantive meeting next week, which, as far as I'm concerned, ain't bad, and if we take one of those meetings in order to have a serious discussion about how we structure the study.... I do think there are some real questions about how we get that structured and whether we want to do it thematically and, if so, what that looks like and therefore how many witnesses we might be presenting per topic, if we're going to divvy it up by topic, which is something that I'd like to see us do.

It may not be what we ultimately decide to do as a committee, but it's certainly something that I'd like to propose. I was prepared to propose that this evening when we had some additional time, but I think we've spent more time this evening talking about meetings to plan the work than we did actually planning the work. For me, I came ready to talk about how we might structure this work and get some of that work done tonight. I think a lot of the time for that has already passed, so I'm resigned to the idea that we take one of the slots we have for next week as a planning meeting.

I just want to offer that up and to let you know, Mr. Chair, that if you're interested in putting your proposal to a vote, namely, that we have a meeting with officials next week, but also that we take a meeting in order to structure the study and get a better sense of how we're going to do this going forward, that would have my full support.

The Chair: Ms. Romanado.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Chair, I want to thank MP Blaikie for reinforcing what I brought forward about 10 minutes ago.

I think the clerk is very competent in terms of setting up times. If it's the will of the committee to allocate one of the slots next week to deal with committee business and to organize, we'll do so, as well as the setting up based on the availability of the witnesses that have been put forth.

The Chair: Mr. Strahl, did you want to speak again?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Yes. I think the whole purpose of the committee being scheduled when it is was so that there are not these conflicts that we find ourselves faced with during sitting weeks. I don't know if the Canada-China committee is meeting, but none of the other committees, unless they are scheduling into break weeks now, are eating up the resources that are normally so scarce. I think we shouldn't be worried about resources for break weeks. That's why this was set up the way it was, with the proposal we all agreed to.

Look, I understand it if we're going to go down this road, but I think that is not something that should prevent us from working substantively and asking, with one week's notice, for people to present on the Canada-U.S. relationship. This isn't a surprise, particularly, and I think we can definitely fill up two meetings and take some time at the end of one of those meetings to talk about the things that Mr. Blaikie wanted to talk about tonight. I think we should strive to hear from witnesses at both the Tuesday and Thursday meetings next week. Quite frankly, that's why we've done it during the break week. It's so that is always a possibility.

• (2000)

The Chair: Mr. Blaikie, did you want to say anything to that? Did you want to put forward a motion?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I was just going to seek some clarification. I do think that some members at various points over the last half hour or so have indicated that they were moving a motion of some kind. I'm just wondering what's on the floor at the moment. If there's anything on the floor, we can dispense with that one way or the other and keep going until we land on something that a majority of us can agree on.

The Chair: My intention of making those comments was not to prevent the committee from having adequate time but was about making the committee more operational and more efficient. That's why I thought of all the steering committees that we have, or the ones I've been on, which have been more organized and have conducted their studies in a manner that is more efficient for everyone. That was the purpose of my comments.

Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, to try to move things forward, let me move that the subcommittee meet next Tuesday during the allotted meeting time of the committee to plan for the future

meetings of the committee, and that on Thursday the clerk be authorized to invite witnesses from the list that the House of Commons determined should be invited by the committee, with priority going to the Canadian ambassador to the United States and the officials from Global Affairs, but if she cannot get those witnesses, that she find other witnesses from the list.

The Chair: Okay.

Is there any other debate?

Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, do you want a recorded vote, or do you want to see if there is consent first?

The Chair: Do we have consent?

Hon. John McKay: Yes, I'm fine with it. It's a good motion.

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent?

Mr. Mark Strahl: No, I would seek to amend Mr. Housefather's motion to have the subcommittee meet for one hour on Tuesday and that the second hour have witnesses as he's described for the Thursday meeting so that we have substantive witnesses at both meetings next week.

The Chair: Would anybody like to speak to that?

Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Either way, let's just get on with it. For God's sake, people. If we can do an hour of substance and an hour of procedure, that's great, but I think that first up needs to be the ambassador and senior officials. Whether that's on Tuesday or Thursday, I don't think much matters.

I do think that having the subcommittee organize subsequent witnesses is actually a useful thing, because otherwise you have this endless debate among 12 people. You just can't do it. So whether it's Mr. Strahl's amendment or Mr. Housefather's main motion, both are supportable, in my opinion.

The Chair: Are there any other comments on Mr. Strahl's amendment?

Madam Clerk.

• (2005)

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, I'll just go right to a recorded division on Mr. Strahl's amendment.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Are we going to vote now on the main motion?

The Clerk: Yes, Mr. Chair. We'll vote on the main motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Are there any other thoughts from anybody, any other motions?

I will work with the clerk, and we will put together some dates and times. We'll send that out to you in the next few days, I believe.

Right, Madam Clerk?

Do I need a motion to adjourn?

All those in favour?

Hon. John McKay: I was in favour an hour ago.

The Chair: Thank you very much, everybody. I look forward to seeing you next week.

Have a great weekend.

The meeting is adjourned.

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