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Chair: The Honourable John McKay



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• (1505)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): This is meeting number 17, called in accordance with Standing Order 106(4).

The committee will consider the request by four members proposing the undertaking of a study on the safety and security of passengers required to stay in federally mandated quarantine facilities and at home under federal quarantine orders.

That being said, the motion has been introduced and is properly before the committee. I'm assuming someone wishes to speak to it.

The first hand I see is Mrs. Stubbs's.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks for very efficiently organizing this meeting in order for our committee to discuss this really urgent matter. It's a terrible circumstance that has brought us all together today. It's certainly one that requires the urgent and comprehensive attention of the members of this public safety committee.

We will all be aware that last week there were initial reports about charges being laid with regard to two separate sexual assaults. One was in a quarantine facility in Montreal, and the other was at the home of a woman adhering to federal quarantine mandate requirements, in which charges have been laid by the Halton Regional Police.

In the first case, the alleged sexual assault in Montreal, the accused is also charged with break and enter and harassment. In the second alleged case of sexual assault, in which charges by the Halton Regional Police have been laid, the individual has also been charged with extortion.

I am sure all members of this committee share our concerns about these incidents and agree with the necessity for us, as members of this committee, to examine overall the risks to the personal security and safety of Canadians and travellers who are in federally run quarantine facilities and under federal mandate and federal orders, as well as the risks to the security of Canadians who are trying to comply with federal orders to quarantine at home.

Our obligation, I believe, is not to examine these specific charges or these specific cases, because law enforcement has clearly already indicated they have sufficient evidence to place such charges, and that they will proceed. It is, though, our fundamental obligation to examine the clear risks to safety and security, and to seek informa-

tion and accountability on what are now these obvious concerns relating to protection, to safety and to security systems within federal facilities. This applies to the training, vetting and oversight of those employed to carry out those federal travel orders in those facilities and at home.

Importantly, this committee's mandate includes the oversight and review of the actions of the CBSA, the RCMP and police with regard to public safety. In a variety of different ways, each of these bodies is directly involved in the federal Quarantine Act and obviously ought to be involved in examining what we now know were alleged sexual assaults against individuals and women under their care.

The argument as to why it is clearly our responsibility, as members of this committee, is of course that these rules are being imposed by the federal government. They are related to restrictions at the borders and on travel, which are clearly under the purview of Public Safety. As federal members of Parliament, and particularly as members of this committee, we are obligated to get answers, first, from officials.

Colleagues, you'll notice in the motion that the majority of the officials we have requested to appear before this committee are in agencies under the purview of Public Safety. Some officials would come from the Public Health Agency of Canada, because of their particular involvement in the execution of these orders, but the majority of witnesses we've called for are clearly under the purview of Public Safety.

• (1510)

I think it is urgent, since there has been no suspension of the program. To date, there have been no comprehensive or substantive answers about what review is happening right now, how many others may be at risk, or what gaps there are. Certainly, there have been no answers so far about what concrete measures will be put in place to prevent these kinds of incidents from happening again, which are obviously a critical concern for every single one of us.

It goes without saying that the very least that Canadians can expect is to be safe, particularly in the presence of federal representatives and while in federal facilities. I'm confident that every single member here shares the belief that these instances are unconscionable and require urgent attention, oversight and examination of what has happened and what actions must be taken to prevent them in future.

Those are the reasons that I anticipate support from this committee to proceed with, in the first place, calling the relevant officials to examine all of these issues comprehensively, and in the second place, calling the relevant ministers in order to also have answers to these crucial questions for Canadians.

That is why we are moving:

that pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness immediately begin a study into the safety and security of passengers required to stay in federally mandated quarantine facilities and at home under federal quarantine orders, and the failure of the federal government to prevent sexual assaults and other crimes against travellers under these federal orders....

That is why we're asking for two meetings to be scheduled within two weeks. I think that's a reasonable amount of time to request officials and ministers to come here with concrete answers while people are clearly at risk. We have no idea of how many other people have been at risk or violated at this moment.

The motion goes on to say that those two meetings would be scheduled within two weeks of the passage of the motion, each being for not less than three hours; that they be televised, and that, for the first meeting, three of the outlined witnesses from the Public Health Agency of Canada, three of the witnesses we've indicated from the RCMP and two of the witnesses we've indicated from the CBSA attend. Then, of course, for the second meeting, it is moved that both the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Health appear at the same time, for no less than three hours; and that if ministers do not agree, within one week of the adoption of this motion, to accept the invitation for the length of time prescribed, the chair be instructed to report to the House forthwith a recommendation that this committee be empowered to order their appearance from time to time.

Thanks again, Chair, for scheduling this urgent meeting. I look forward to the consideration of our motion. I anticipate that we'll all take our moral and powerful responsibility to protect vulnerable people and protect the safety and security of all Canadians, especially when we have reports that they have been violated in a federal facility, under federal orders, with federally mandated individuals, and also in the sanctity of a woman's own home by a federally mandated screening officer who was there to carry out compliance and enforcement of federal rules.

Thanks, colleagues, for your consideration. I look forward to the future work we're going to do on this really critical and urgent issue.

• (1515)

The Chair: I see five hands.

Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you for arranging for this meeting on such short notice.

Thanks to the clerk and staff as well.

There are a few things Ms. Stubbs said that we absolutely agree with. All women deserve to live free from sexual violence, and there's absolutely no doubt that everyone on this committee agrees with that. No one deserves to be subjected to a sexual assault.

The one that occurred in the home was in my community of Oakville, and it is currently under investigation by the Halton Regional Police Service. They arrested and charged a security guard on February 23.

I find it interesting that just last week Ms. Stubbs informed the public safety committee that the committee should not act when there is an ongoing investigation. She tried to dissuade us from doing anything until the investigation was completed, but now she has changed her mind. Whatever. That's fine.

One thing I would like to point out, though, is that the RCMP and CBSA do not have any involvement with this. The incident in Oakville is being investigated by the Halton Regional Police Service. The RCMP is not involved. In fact, when I read the Halton police's press release, it's quite clear that they were hired and trained by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

That being said, it doesn't really matter who is responsible, because the incidents happened. I just want the record to show that the RCMP and CBSA are not involved.

I note as well that the Conservatives have brought exactly the same motion to the status of women committee. I'm not sure if they are trying to tie up government time on multiple committees on this, or whether they will withdraw that motion if public safety chooses to go ahead.

Chair, I would like to propose three amendments to the Conservatives' motion: first, that the meeting be two hours long; and second, that the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Health appear first. I think we need to hear from them. Third, I would also like to propose that we add as a witness Dr. Isaac Bogoch, to provide an independent assessment of vaccines, quarantines and all of that.

I will leave it there, Chair, but I would propose those three amendments to the motion that the Conservatives have brought forward.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will debate the amendment first. I'm working on the assumption that it's not considered by the mover to be a friendly amendment. That would be the focus of the initial debate and vote, but since the substance of the matter is inextricable, I'm going to treat this as one debate for both the amendment and the motion itself unless there is wild and violent objection.

Seeing no wildness or violence, I will recognize Mr. Motz.

• (1520)

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I will not speak to the proposed amendments to the motion. I will speak to the comments made by Ms. Damoff and also say that I'm in support of the motion.

Ms. Damoff suggested that there was an about-face from the committee meeting last week on the investigation being held by this committee into a matter that she brought forward. On that particular incident, you're comparing apples to oranges.

This motion does nothing to investigate the incident that the Halton regional police are investigating—zero. It has to do with the policy. It has to do with the manner in which training may be conducted and the manner in which background vetting occurred. How are these organizations selected? Who's responsible and accountable for them? There are many questions Canadians have, and it is not a rejigging or a re-examination of an already involved police investigation. This has zero to do with that. We want to be extremely clear on that matter. It's not the same as what was talked about last week.

Also, it's important to realize, as Ms. Stubbs mentioned briefly, that experts across our country—women's advocacy groups—have said that for every sexual assault that is reported there are a great many more that go unreported. If we're to look at what the potential is here, we have no idea of the impact of what is apparently an incoherent process to identify quarantine sites, to then manage them and to have people provide security for them. We have no idea how many other people may have been victims at this stage.

Plus, we have no idea, not only of how many people have been subject to past occurrences in their own home, but of who might be at risk of future occurrences should there not be some corrective measures taken. We need to have this looked at and to ask where are the gaps that exist now in the identifying and vetting of these individuals who are quarantine officers and who go and check on compliance. As well, there are the facilities and the logistics around the facilities involving individuals who are there to provide security. There are the reports of whether locks are actually removed from doors to keep people in or out, and the risk that poses.

There's a lot that we need to look at here, and the fact that the government apparently is unwilling to have a suspension of this particular policy until this can be identified certainly creates an urgency for this committee to get involved. This is a public safety issue. It is definitely a public safety issue. If this is not public safety, then I don't know where the definition of public safety would fall.

Those are my comments for now, Chair. I might follow them up later in this debate.

The Chair: Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I want to say that we are all very concerned about the two incidents that have been reported, one of which was committed by a fellow traveller who was in a quarantine hotel and the other by a quarantine or screening officer.

I had a look at the Quarantine Act before this meeting, and all of this is under the Quarantine Act. It seems that all of the powers under the Quarantine Act—and it defines “minister” as the Minister of Public Health—are given to the Minister of Public Health. That's to

appoint quarantine officers, to establish quarantine locations, to put rules in place and to be in charge of the whole system.

It seems to me that in the first instance, with regard to the whole quarantine policy, we're being asked by this motion to recommend the suspension of the quarantine measures that have been put in place for public health reasons, as a result of two incidents.

I'm wondering how far this committee has jurisdiction to look into it. Is it something that the Minister of Health and the Department of Health should be examining, if that is their desire? I don't know whether this committee should be making recommendations, as is being suggested here, about public health matters and suspending the quarantine, I presume, due to the lack of safety.

I by no means want to make light of the assaults that have taken place in these circumstances. We have various public bodies that are enforcing the law. Police officers have been charged with assault and worse, and we don't suspend the operation of the police force. I'm not saying that is a full analogy in these particular circumstances. I know this is a new program and there's probably a requirement to have a look at the measures that have been taken to ensure that the people who are given authority under this Quarantine Act are properly trained and that due diligence has been done in carrying that out.

I'm curious as to whether this committee is in a position to do that, given that it's the ministry of public health that's responsible. I raise that by way of trying to put some sort of a box around what we're being asked to do. Does the Minister of Public Safety, Minister Blair, have any responsibility in these circumstances when the activity is undertaken under the public health act by people appointed by the Minister of Health?

The question, really, is how far we can go under our jurisdiction. To say that the matter is one of public safety, generally, doesn't mean that the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has a role.

If we're going to do anything here, we ought to try to narrow the scope of what we're trying to do. We don't shut down the prisons because there's an assault occurring within the prison, and we don't shut down a program for public health because something needs to be fixed regarding the way it's operating.

I want to say that by way of opening remarks. I'm prepared to consider what we as a committee can do and what we as a committee ought to do. I think the idea of the full scale that's been proposed by Ms. Stubbs seems to be a bit of a reach by this committee under this subject.

● (1525)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Van Popta.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Canadians are very concerned about this. I've heard a lot from people calling my constituency office, and from people I know in the community who are very disturbed about the poor rollout of this program, which I think could be a good one. Conservatives have said all along, since the very beginning of the pandemic, that we need to look at our borders to make sure travellers coming into Canada are not bringing the COVID-19 virus in with them.

I want to relate a story from my riding. My first exposure to the virus—we weren't even calling it COVID-19 at the time—was in January of 2020, six weeks before the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic. There was a scheduled Chinese New Year event here in my riding that I was going to attend. It was cancelled because people from the Chinese community here in my riding of Langley—Aldergrove, which is quite a significant community, said, “There's something going on in China and we want to stop that, so we're going to cancel this meeting because we're just not quite sure what it is.”

This has been with us for 13 months, and the Liberal government has been extremely slow in securing our borders. Canadians want to know that the government is doing whatever it needs to do to keep them safe and healthy. Whereas this program of the hotel quarantines would generally have our support, it has to be done properly, and it's becoming abundantly clear that the developing of the program and rolling it out have been very poor and very inadequate.

Is it a matter of public safety? Well, it's a matter of public safety and health, of course, but what we're talking about now and what this motion is about is responding to two cases of sexual assault. That needs to be looked at. That is the role of this committee. I fully support this committee's looking into these incidents. That's not to look at them specifically, as was suggested by one of the earlier speakers. We're not going to be investigating cases of sexual assault specifically, but the establishment of the program. Were officers properly trained? Were they vetted? What's it going to look like going forward? Can the program be fixed in short order, or does it have to be dismantled and rebuilt?

These are the things we're going to be looking at in accordance with the motion. I think the motion is definitely in order, and it is certainly for this committee to investigate.

Thank you.

● (1530)

The Chair: Mr. Kurek, are you still wishing to defer, or do you wish to speak?

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I would make a couple of quick comments.

My colleague, Mr. Harris, mentioned the motion including mention of a suspension of the program, and the motion does not suggest that. There have been aspects of debate where Conservatives have taken that position, but truly, the reason for this motion, as Mrs. Stubbs outlined, is to get some answers to the very serious questions Canadians have regarding this very serious issue and the continuing revelations that keep coming forward.

I would just note this. It seems interesting that members from the governing party would suggest that this is somehow wasting the government's time. With all due respect, this is Parliament. Parliament is made up of members of Parliament from across our country, representing various parties, and it is incumbent upon all members of Parliament to ensure that Canadians get the answers they deserve, whether it's with regard to some of the very serious allegations that have been brought forward or, further, to a number of other questions outlined in this motion. Certainly, I would hope there is universal support for Canadians to in fact get these answers.

With that, the job of parliamentarians is to get answers on serious questions like this, and I look forward to being able to support Mrs. Stubbs' motion in this regard.

Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Pam Damoff: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I want to be clear that I'm the only person from the government side who has spoken thus far, and I never said this was a waste of time.

The Chair: That's a point of clarification, not a point of order, but thank you.

I'm going to go to members of the standing committee first, and then I see that Ms. Rempel Garner wishes to speak, so I'll go to her. The first person up is Madame Khera, then Madame Michaud and then Mr. Motz.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Brampton West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, again, for bringing this meeting together so urgently.

First, let me just say we all strongly condemn the incidents that have been raised. As pointed out by my colleague, Ms. Damoff, the incidents that have been mentioned are currently under a criminal investigation. I also agree with respect to the urgency of this. It's important to hear directly from the minister and, of course, about the quarantine measures and the issues that have been raised.

I think we can all come to some common ground here with the amendment that has been proposed by my colleague to have, perhaps, one meeting with Minister Blair and Minister Hajdu for the first hour, and to have officials in the second hour to answer some of the questions, as Mr. Kurek has suggested.

This is in light of the fact that our committee is already very behind on some of the very important work we set out to do, including finishing up the study on systemic racism that we started back in the summer of last year. There are some very important recommendations in it. It's incumbent upon all of us to have that study completed and presented to the House so we can start on some of the tangible actions to address those issues.

I think that with the amendment we can actually do both things at the same time: address some of the issues that have been raised, which I think are important, and also move forward with the work this committee has set out to do. I agree with the amendment by my colleague.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Michaud.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll be brief. I welcome the Conservatives' motion.

We have a right to ask a number of questions. Since mandatory hotel quarantines came into effect, there have been a number of lapses, including lapses that have caused some inconvenience to individuals in terms of public safety. That's why the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security needs to study it. Obviously, this also affects health, since everything related to the pandemic necessarily affects health. Still, Canada Border Services Agency officers play an important role in the implementation of quarantine, which is under federal jurisdiction. So it's appropriate that the matter be studied here.

Even today, when we ask the Public Health Agency of Canada questions, we're referred to Border Services officers. We ask questions on behalf of people who are currently abroad and who want to return to the country. They are asking about exemption from quarantine, for example. We're told that decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis or arbitrarily. So I think there are some questions that need to be asked. There's also the matter of the assaults that took place. We've been waiting for answers to some questions for a long time.

At the start of the pandemic, I tabled a motion that dealt with border management. Since I think all of this is directly related, I agree that the committee should study this issue.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Harris just put his hand up, but I was anticipating going to Ms. Rempel Garner.

Ms. Rempel Garner.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Thank you, Chair. Thank you for having me at your meeting today to discuss an important issue.

I want to address some of Mr. Harris's concerns with regard to scope. I have also been following this motion as a member of the Standing Committee on Health. I might be able to address some of his concerns and perhaps some of the thoughts of my colleagues on why this best belongs here.

First, to clarify his concern on scope, I read through the motion again. It doesn't say anything about making a recommendation to the House that echoes the calls of the Conservatives to temporarily suspend the program. This is just looking at process and procedure to understand where the failings occurred and how they can be rectified quickly so that people, especially Canadian citizens who are in this situation right now, don't continue to be subjected to the chaos and unsafe conditions that are currently being reported in the media.

With regard to the appropriateness of public safety, I note that the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security has the mandate to review "the legislation, policies, programs and expenditure plans of government departments and agencies responsible for

public safety and national security, policing and law enforcement, corrections and conditional release of federal offenders, emergency management, crime prevention and the protection of Canada's borders."

As it relates to COVID-19, on the CBSA's own website they have a chart that shows all the responsibilities of enforcement of health measures. Certainly, PHAC does have a large role in that, but as it relates to safety and security measures, it's very clear by that chart that both the CBSA and the RCMP have, in their own regard, taken and noted responsibility for measures. For example, it says, "Enforce as needed when travellers do not comply with orders (for example, during visits for compliance)." That's stated as an RCMP measure, as is "Undertake enforcement actions, as necessary." The CBSA is to "support law enforcement agencies by providing entry information".

I reviewed this as the Conservative shadow minister for health, and there's a lot of stuff. An argument could have been made at health committee to have it go to SECU, so I think that's why it's here. If we're looking at the process to keep people safe, the law enforcement agencies would traditionally be reporting to this committee. That said, COVID means there's a lot of overlap, but I think when we're looking at process, that's probably why it's before this committee today.

Second, I noted that my colleague, Ms. Damoff, talked about the fact that there may potentially be—I wasn't aware of this—a motion in front of the status of women committee. I think it's really important that when we are looking at public safety concerns, we are taking a gender analysis of that situation. I'm sure all the women on this committee have travelled alone at some point in time. We might have a hotel routine that the guys on this committee wouldn't have, like closing the security locks and ramming a chair against the door. Whereas I think the status of women committee could have some scope in looking at the security impacts of quarantine measures on women, or that sort of stuff, I'm interested to know whether or not the CBSA and the RCMP, who report to this committee, undertook that type of thinking when looking at and designing measures for the quarantine hotel situation and for the situation that occurred in Ms. Damoff's riding. I think that's something that falls squarely under the committee here.

With regard to the amendment that's on the floor, a lot of thought was given to the structure and order of the meetings. I think it's really important, from my experience with the health committee on other measures, to have officials within the department who are writing the policy give their thoughts prior to having the ministers come in to talk about the political decisions and the political implications. There is a difference between the officials and the information they provide to committee as opposed to the ministers. The ministers would be there to talk about overall political direction and policy. The public officials would be there to talk about technical information used to inform those decisions.

• (1540)

My colleagues who are official members of this committee gave that some thought and wanted to have the officials first, so we would have the technical information to be able to brief and prepare other members of the committee prior to the ministers. Isn't that right? It's sort of looking at what technical information and analysis was used or given to the government, and then trying to understand whether or not the government used that information and what would then be the outcome in terms of better public policy.

In that regard, I don't think the amendments.... For colleagues on the call here who are voting, I would advise against voting against this amendment. I think the order of the meeting as it stands right now will allow colleagues to better put forward recommendations and better question the ministers, frankly.

In terms of time, this is a pretty serious issue. It's one that has to be addressed expeditiously. I think the amount of time that's put in there will allow colleagues of all political stripes, including the Bloc and the NDP, to have enough question rounds with the ministers and public officials to actually get that information out. I know that when ministers come here, members of the minority parties typically don't get as many opportunities for question rounds, so with government members trying to reduce the amount of time that has been proposed in this meeting, I would hate to see those opportunities lost.

With that, I think it's very clear that the scope does fall in here. I want to reassure my colleague, Mr. Harris, that the motion itself does not call for any action. It's just a study of what's going on. As the representative who is here from the Standing Committee on Health, I think it would fall squarely within this mandate. It could inform other studies at the Standing Committee on Health, certainly, but in understanding the process by which our security agencies and law enforcement agencies fall under the auspices of this committee, how they have made these decisions will help inform our committee's decision on whether or not to pursue that afterwards.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

I note Ms. Rempel pointed out that the request to suspend the quarantine was not contained in the motion, and she's quite correct.

I mentioned that because in the letter to the chair, which was written by the four members of the Conservative party, the fifth paragraph reads, "given the failure to ensure that Canadians under federally mandated quarantines are protected, the Liberal government must put a pause on these new measures". I took that to mean that the idea behind this was to suspend the quarantine hotel measures. That's why I mentioned it.

I think it is an important measure. It does say "while continuing with the pre-existing on-arrival testing and the 14-day at-home quarantine for all international travellers." It's not to stop the 14-day quarantine but to suspend the measures, which I guess means the measures for the hotel procedures.

I don't want it to be understood that I mentioned these issues from the Quarantine Act to stop an investigation by this committee

into any aspects of this. I was merely pointing out that the division of activity and responsibility is not through the public safety ministry per se, because Canada border services deal with what happens at the border. I'm interested in knowing what the relationship is between the activity at the border and where the Public Health Agency of Canada takes over. Does it simply involve having quarantine officers at the airport facilities, with things then taken over by quarantine screening officers who look after transportation to the hotels, etc.?

There are questions that need to be asked and, certainly, if we have before the committee people from public health who are responsible for the establishment of the forces or the quarantine officers who are in charge, we would like to know what the training arrangements are and who is responsible for those. There are questions that need to be asked, and they need to be answered. That's something I am prepared to see happen.

I wasn't speaking against this committee having any say in it at all. I'm sorry I didn't get to speak before Ms. Rempel Garner, because that's what I wanted to point out before she even started. I understand where she's coming from in terms of the concerns that exist, and I think we all share the view that the public has to have some confidence that what's being done is being done properly.

By the way, if we have only one or two meetings, I think the idea of hearing from the officials first is a good one, because let's hear what the program is, and then let's hear what the ministers have to say about it. Then we can ask questions we might have as to how the supervision is working and how the due diligence was carried out with regard to establishing the program. It is something that has been put together pretty quickly, even though the government had many months to decide whether to do this.

Obviously, with the new variants that have penetrated our country.... We here in Newfoundland and Labrador are very familiar with the new British variant. We have seen how quickly it travelled around my riding. It hit 22 high schools in a matter of two weeks with infections involving the British variant, which is very contagious and very worrisome.

We're all aware of how important this is as a public health measure. I think Canadians support the notion of strict measures at the border. In fact, many of the Conservatives have for many months been calling for stronger measures at the border. Now that we have them, they are certainly imperfect. There's no question about that. We need to have a look at that. I support the idea of proceeding with an examination of that.

• (1545)

I am also very mindful of this committee's other work, which I don't think we need to say more about other than to say that one of the studies is on racism in policing, and we are all familiar with how serious that matter is in terms of public safety as well as the proper operation of our police forces. We have done a major study. We need to get a report done. We can't postpone that.

Now, I know we're talking about two meetings over six hours. I think perhaps we can do what needs to be done in a shorter period of time.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Before I call on Ms. Stubbs, the way I hear your argument is that you would flip the order of ministers and officials. You would have the officials first and ministers second. Is that correct? I just want to make sure I heard you correctly.

Mr. Jack Harris: Yes. I would have the officials first. They could talk about the design of the program and what they're doing, and they could answer questions. Then the ministers could respond to any questions members would have.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I can change my...

The Chair: I'll leave it to you to make a friendly amendment, as they say, as opposed to an unfriendly amendment.

I see Ms. Stubbs first and then Ms. Damoff.

You're on mute.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thank you, Chair.

As much as some colleagues must love me in that mode, thanks for letting me know.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Don't put it to a vote.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: I want to reinforce that, of course, the request in the original motion was to have the officials first and then the ministers, for exactly the reasons outlined by our colleagues.

Again, I want to add to the comments made by other colleagues about the relevance of Public Safety on this issue. It is, of course, in part because it is a federal regulation that ensures that all air travellers must now present themselves to CBSA to validate their health conditions and their quarantine plans. Unfortunately, whether they like it or not, the subsequent safety and security of Canadians and travellers will clearly be subject in part to the actions and decisions of CBSA officers when Canadians are sent to quarantine sites or mandated to quarantine and isolate at home. That is yet another reason that this is in the right committee and that it is under our purview to get answers and accountability. The Quarantine Act systematically and explicitly refers to the responsibilities and roles of CBSA agents. These are border rules and decisions that have then resulted in where Canadians or travellers end up.

Colleagues, notwithstanding maybe our differing perspectives on what remedies or actions should be taken right now, we really ought to be debating this subject. The request of the motion, as I deliberately stated in the beginning of my opening comments, isn't actually to examine individual cases. That's not what's being called for at all. Also, Jack's right that the motion itself doesn't include Conservative proposals for a suspension right now until all these issues can be ironed out and figured out and the safety and security

of all Canadians and all travellers can be assured. We should be making our decision based on the motion at hand.

I just hope those comments will assure and reinforce to everybody here that this is the rightful place for us to be seeking the answers and clarity on these issues that Canadians deserve. It has to do fundamentally with their security and their safety in the process of compliance with federal orders that are under the responsibility and purview of the CBSA and a variety of other agencies under Public Safety.

Thanks, Chair.

The Chair: Madame Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thanks, Chair.

As I indicated just before Ms. Stubbs spoke, I would be prepared to change my amendment so that the officials come first and the ministers come in the second hour. The rest would remain the same.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: I just wanted to add that this is something that I think is brought on an urgent basis, and I agree with it being brought forward.

I want to add that in that sense of urgency, I would be happy to find the time this week, if the committee is available, to have this meeting. If we can get the officials to be present, then we should do it this week. If it is a matter of urgency and the concern is there, then I'm prepared to find the time to do that if other members are available and we can get the officials and the ministers to be present.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Chair, would it be possible to get the text of the amendment?

The Chair: I was going to have the clerk repeat it back to the committee so that everybody understands it and we are all voting on the amendment as we now understand it.

Mr. Clerk, can you do that for us?

[*Translation*]

Could you please read the motion in English or French?

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Mark D'Amore): Shall I read the whole text of the motion, or just where the changes are proposed?

The Chair: We're dealing with the amendment first, and then the friendly amendment proposed by Mr. Harris.

Perhaps you could read it back to the committee on the basis of the amendment first, because that will be the first vote. Then we'll go to the main motion, which I don't think needs to be read to the committee because everyone has a copy of it.

The Clerk: In English, with the proposals for amendment, the motion reads:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness immediately begin a study into the safety and security of passengers required to stay in federally mandated quarantine facilities and at home under federal quarantine orders, and the failure of the federal government to prevent sexual assaults and other crimes against travelers under these federal orders, that two meetings be scheduled within two weeks of the passage of this motion, each meeting being for not less than...

Then the first part of the amendment is “two hours”—

Ms. Pam Damoff: No. It's one meeting, Mr. Clerk. It's one meeting for two hours.

The Clerk: I'm sorry. So that's one meeting for two hours. The motion goes on to say that the meeting should be televised and that the following witnesses should be invited:

from the Public Health Agency of Canada: Cindy Evans, Vice President, Emergency Management Branch, Karen Walton, Senior Director, Emergency Management Branch, and Sally Thornton, Vice President, Health Security Infrastructure Branch;

from the RCMP: Michael Duheme, Deputy Commissioner for Federal Policing, Ken Hansen, Director of Federal Enforcement Branch, and Warren Coons, Director of Integrated Border Enforcement Team;

from the CBSA: Paul MacKinnon, Vice President, Intelligence and Enforcement and Andrew LeFrank, Vice President, Director General for Enforcement and Intelligence; and...

The other addition was Dr. Isaac Bogoch.

The motion continues, “that both the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Health appear at the same time”—

Ms. Pam Damoff: It would be, I think, “for the second hour, that the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Health appear”, period.

The Clerk: Okay. It's “for the second hour”.

It continues:

If the Ministers do not agree, within one week of the adoption of this motion, to accept this invitation for the length of time prescribed, the Chair shall be instructed to report to the House forthwith a recommendation that this committee be empowered to order his or her appearance from time to time.

The Chair: The discussion is on the motion as proposed to be amended. I hope people understand the flipping that's going on here between ministers and officials.

I see that Mr. Motz has his hand up.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to speak to the understanding Mr. Harris had in the agreement to this. First of all, it's news to me, in reading this, that we are proposing one two-hour meeting when the initial motion was for two three-hour meetings. I think we can speak to that.

Is that the understanding you had, Mr. Harris, that it was going to be one two-hour meeting? That's not the understanding I had with the amendment that was read initially by Ms. Damoff.

• (1600)

The Chair: That's a legitimate point of clarification. Maybe Mr. Harris and Ms. Damoff can speak to that.

Mr. Jack Harris: I certainly heard the two hours, but with all the witnesses we have, it may not be possible to do it in two hours,

so if someone wants to amend that to three hours, we can have one three-hour meeting. I'm interested in doing this efficiently and soon, as opposed to having it go into the next week and the week after. This is something that is current and it's concerning. Members of this committee are concerned about it, as we've just heard from everyone and from our visitor, Ms. Rempel Garner.

I think we should capture the moment and do it this week if we can find two or three hours. The amendment as it stands right now is for two hours, but if it were three hours, I'd be satisfied with that too.

Mr. Glen Motz: Chair, in response to that I would suggest—if the mover of the amendment agrees—that we have either two two-hour meetings or one four-hour meeting as an amendment to that, and that we do it soon. We're certainly able to try to make that happen. That would be one four-hour meeting or two two-hour meetings as soon as can be arranged.

The Chair: Okay, there's been one friendly amendment to Madame Damoff's initial amendment, which has been accepted and read into the record. If we are going to change that, or if Mr. Motz wishes to move an additional amendment, he's welcome to do so, unless Madame Damoff is prepared to see Mr. Motz's comments as friendly comments.

Ms. Pam Damoff: No, Chair. I'm not.

Mr. Glen Motz: Then, Chair, in light of the original motion and in light of Ms. Damoff's amendment, I would move a subamendment to add that we have the public officials first for a two-hour meeting, and the ministers second for a two-hour meeting. Whether that will be for one four-hour time slot or two individual meetings will be up to the committee.

That is the subamendment I would move to this particular motion, please.

The Chair: Okay, that was the subamendment to the amendment. I hope we're all keeping track here.

I thought I saw Madame Michaud's hand up.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: I was going to suggest the same amendment as the one Mr. Motz just proposed.

I don't think a four-hour meeting is necessary; it would be good to have two two-hour meetings. Having the meetings on Wednesday of this week and next Monday would be ideal. Then, we could continue our other studies. I realize it's a short time frame.

[*English*]

The Chair: I don't want to get too far into the weeds on how and when and where.

I think I saw Mr. Kurek next.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When the initial amendment was read out there wasn't a lot of clarity in terms of one meeting versus two, and I think given the conversations we've had over the last few minutes, there certainly was a bit of confusion. I think if there were to be only two hours—an hour for each—we'd be talking about very little time for the members of the third and fourth parties to ask questions, so the time for the NDP and the Bloc would be severely limited, especially given the way the questioning rounds go. A two-hour total would cut short.... There's not long after the opening statements and then all of a sudden, Mr. Chair, you're having to suspend and go on to the next hour.

Certainly I am amenable to seeing some changes, and to it being done quickly. I think Mr. Harris mentioned that later in the week would be acceptable. I would agree. These are questions to which Canadians are demanding answers. Mr. Van Popta mentioned that he's getting calls to his constituency office, and I've had a number of people walk in since this meeting started, to ask my staff some of those very questions. Actually, it was one walk-in and one phone call.

Two hours is just far too little time. It certainly should be more than that. Mr. Motz has brought forward a compromise that I hope the committee will be amenable to.

• (1605)

The Chair: Colleagues, if you could you keep your comments isolated to the procedure, as opposed to relitigating the reasons for or against doing this, that would be helpful. Otherwise, we may well go into next week.

I think the order now is Ms. Damoff, Mr. Lightbound and Mr. Harris.

Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thanks, Chair.

I'd be prepared to say one three-hour meeting. I would also like to add that with these witnesses we also have other officials as the department deems appropriate. I have no idea, from these agencies, whether those are the right people we need to hear from. So for one three-hour meeting, we could just add—maybe the clerk can get the appropriate wording—that we have other officials as may be appropriate. We want to make sure, if we're going to do this, that we have the right meeting.

I also want to add that I hope the Conservative Party will be just as enthusiastic for meetings on our systemic racism study, which is extremely urgent and needs to be done.

The Chair: I think that was probably off the point of procedural debate.

Yes, Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, just for procedural clarification, can the mover of an amendment—and I think we're now into a subamendment—amend their own amendment when it's being considered?

The Chair: The way I understood it was that it was a friendly amendment, although I think Mr. Motz moved it as either three hours or two hours and two hours.

Where are we on that?

Glen, can you clarify that, please?

Mr. Glen Motz: I asked whether there was amicability for an amendment to Ms. Damoff's original motion. She indicated that there was not, so then I moved my own motion, as a subamendment, that it be one four-hour meeting or two two-hour meetings.

The Chair: Okay, so that amendment is still alive. Fair enough.

Mr. Lightbound.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm starting to get lost with all the amendments and subamendments that are being proposed.

The three-hour compromise proposed by Ms. Damoff and also suggested by Mr. Harris would allow us to move quickly on this important issue. We hope it'll be this week so that we can return to our important studies, including the one on systemic racism, while having more time to devote to the study proposed today.

I fully support the proposal to hold one three-hour meeting. I'm even prepared to move this amendment if necessary, so that we can speed things up.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will have to deal with Mr. Motz's motion first, procedurally, and if it succeeds, the motion would be amended. Then we would vote on the amendment as amended. Then we would vote on the overall motion.

If that is confusing, that's perfectly understandable.

Madame Lambropoulos.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Motz proposed two things, and I'd be completely against one of them in particular. If we make this more than one meeting, we're really taking away from the time we could be spending on a study that we started a long time ago and that should get quite a bit of consideration.

I definitely think the current motion that's on the floor is one that's really important, but we should probably finish with it this week so we can continue on to our committee work as of next week.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Harris for, dare I say, the final word?

• (1610)

Mr. Jack Harris: You can say that. I hope you're right.

I think we're trying to aim at some sort of consensus here. There seems to be an interest, at least from many members of the committee, to do it this week. It has been brought as an emergency resolution, and I accept it as that. I think, just by way of suggestion, that an awful lot of witnesses were chosen by their position. I'm not sure they actually had much to do with the establishment of this particular procedure, particularly the CBSA people and the RCMP. Maybe we don't need to hear from each one of those witnesses unless they have something to say. With a little bit of judicious decision-making about who the key witnesses are, I think this can be done efficiently. I think it can be done in three hours. I would like to hear from the officials first, and that's now in the motion.

I hear Mr. Kurek's concern about people not getting enough say, particularly the two parties that are in the second rounds and what-not, left with two and a half minutes instead of the regular. However, when we do this, we could treat the third hour with the ministers as if it were a new meeting, and have the regular rounds so that we're not left with the rounds where Madam Michaud and I share five minutes. That would be the suggestion on how we could proceed efficiently during the course of this week, which is, of course, a constituency week and not a parliamentary week. Given the nature of what's before us, I believe it's a good thing to do.

I will be supporting a three-hour meeting to see if we can do it this week and do it as efficiently as possible. If we have an hour with the two ministers, we will certainly be able to find out which one of them is responsible and ask the appropriate questions in fairly short order after they have made their opening remarks.

That would be my final word, if it's possible to have a final word in this meeting.

The Chair: I wish.

Mr. Motz.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you, Chair.

I want to speak to the comment made previously about reducing the number of witnesses and/or finding other witnesses. It's important to note that a lot of work was done to find the right people—the right witnesses to ask the right questions and to give us the answers we're looking for. Looking for other people around the department would be contradictory to the things we have already done here and the efforts that have been made to find the right people to answer our questions.

The officials don't operate on, "Well, who wants to come?" They come at the direction of a committee. Let's keep that in mind about the proper officials. If we want the right answers, let's get the right people here. This is an important enough study. Let's get the right people here. The individuals who have been identified need to be the ones who are at this committee. The work has been done to understand who they are and what their roles are in order to make sure they can answer the questions for Canadians. In order to do that, so that we can all learn, rushing through a meeting...

We're prepared to have the meeting this week. Whether it's one four-hour meeting or two two-hour meetings, let's get it done this week. We can move on to our other studies that are critically important on our regular schedule for next week, so let's get these meet-

ings done this week. We're committed to doing that. Let's get a four-hour meeting going with the officials who have been there.

Chair, I just want to confirm something. I know you have trouble keeping up with all the amendments and the subamendments and the subamendments to the subamendments. If, every time we vote, the clerk would be so kind as to confirm exactly what we're voting on, that would be helpful.

The Chair: I would agree with that.

The final speaker is Madame Damoff.

• (1615)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thanks, Chair.

Just to clarify, I wasn't suggesting that any of these witnesses should not come. I just wanted to add that they weren't limited to being the only ones who could come. While I appreciate that Mr. Motz feels these are the ideal people to be present, I would like to give the department the option of bringing others, if so needed, so that we can actually get good information and have the right people in the room. It wasn't to take away from any of these here. It was simply to add "and any other officials, as determined".

Anyway, I think Glen misunderstood what I was suggesting.

The Chair: I don't see any others wishing to speak.

Mr. Motz had a good suggestion. So that we all understand what is being proposed, I believe his amendment is for two two-hour meetings or one four-hour meeting. In all other respects, the motion as it's presently constituted would remain the same.

Via Mr. Clerk, can I confirm that?

The Clerk: Yes, on the subamendment of Mr. Motz, it's two two-hour meetings or one four-hour meeting.

The Chair: Okay. Do people want a recorded vote? I don't see any appetite. It's actually easier to record the vote, because otherwise I'm relying on who I see and who I don't see.

(Subamendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: We're now on the original amendment, as proposed by Madame Damoff, which, if I'm keeping track correctly, has been amended to flip the ministers and the officials.

Ms. Pam Damoff: No, I'm not going to do that anymore, Chair. It's just three hours, adding Dr. Bogoch, and adding to the list of witnesses "and any other officials as deemed appropriate by the department".

The Chair: Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: On a point of order, Chair, I don't think it's in order to change your motion again after we've had a vote on the previous one. Part of the reason for doing what I did was related to the decision that had been made to create a motion to accept a change to that motion. I'm opposed to that.

Ms. Pam Damoff: What did I change, Jack? Sorry.

Mr. Jack Harris: It was flipping them to have the ministers first versus last.

Ms. Pam Damoff: No, the ministers aren't first. The officials are first, and the ministers are after. Is that what we wanted?

Mr. Jack Harris: Okay.

The Chair: As I understand it, we are voting on, if you will, one three-hour meeting, with officials first and ministers second. I think those are the substantive changes that Madame Damoff is proposing on this vote.

Am I correct?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Yes.

• (1620)

The Clerk: Just as a point of clarification, was there not “and other officials that the department deems appropriate” as part of the amendment? I just want us to have that cleared up.

Ms. Pam Damoff: It's not a hill I'm going to die on, but it was something I added.

The Chair: If there's no hill to die on, my suggestion would be that we remove the hill so we can get as much consensus here as possible.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Just for clarity, can you summarize again exactly what we're voting on? Please read it out so we know with total clarity.

The Chair: We're voting on one three-hour meeting. The first panel of witnesses will be the officials. The second panel will be the two ministers requested.

Mr. Jack Harris: It has to be clear that the officials are here for a full two hours and then the ministers for one.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Are we clear?

Mr. Clerk, would you call the roll?

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

The Chair: With that, we're now voting on the main motion as amended. Can we call that vote?

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

The Chair: Okay. Some begrudging harmony broke out in the last second.

Now, this is a very tall order for the clerk and me to put this together this week. We will make our best efforts.

Is it the preference to have it this week as opposed to next week in our regular time? If we have regular time slots, we'll have to somehow or other extend our regular two-hour meeting.

Can I get a sense of whether it's preferable to have it this week versus next week?

Go ahead, Glen.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you, Chair.

As I indicated previously, I think it's important business. It's a critical issue. We brought it forward for an emergency debate because it's an emergency and it requires attention sooner rather than later. As well, I believe we should be able to find time for the officials and the ministers to be here this week, hopefully.

I would hate to have some of the studies that are critical to us.... The Levesque study is important. The systemic racism study is important. We need to get at them, so my push would be for this week and hopefully not on Friday morning, because I have NSICOP all morning.

• (1625)

The Chair: We all have conflicts at the best of times. This will be a difficult thing to pull together in four days, or really in three days.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: I'd very much prefer to do it this week, so that we can continue with our other work. As this is an emergency motion, given the circumstances, I would prefer to have it on Thursday or Friday of this week, if that's at all possible.

The Chair: Madame Stubbs.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thanks, Chair.

I would note—amiably of course, after all of this—that my original motion allowed for two weeks. I'm very grateful for all my colleagues' support to have it done this week, because it is so urgent.

On a logistical matter, can we have a general consensus here that the presentations for the officials at that meeting be limited to a maximum of 15 minutes? That would maximize the question time for each and every one of the members on this committee, regardless of the size of their party.

Mr. Glen Motz: Shannon, are you referring to 15 minutes total, for all of the officials?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Yes. I think that should be enough for officials to give opening comments. That way it maximizes the opportunity for us as members of the committee to do our job.

The Chair: How many groups are there? There's public health and public safety. I don't have the motion in front of me, so I don't know how many sets of officials you're inviting.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: There's public health, the RCMP and the CBSA. From what I understand, the health committee has just recently done this. They limited the overall time slots just to maximize—

The Chair: Essentially, it's five minutes per group. Okay.

I think I saw Mr. Harris next.

Mr. Jack Harris: That's fine. They can explain what they do so we know what their role is. Then we can ask the questions. I think that's fair enough.

The Chair: Madame Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Chair, I think you and the clerk have direction from all of us that we'd like it as soon as possible, but I also recognize that you're constrained by things like the House administration, interpretation, availability of ministers with two days' notice and all those kinds of things.

It's pretty clear that everybody would like this as soon as possible, but I don't think it's realistic to require you to do it this week. There are a lot of elements that are completely out of your control in doing that. I think we would trust you and the clerk to do it in a timely way.

The Chair: Well, I won't expose myself to a metaphorical flogging. I'm just worried about trying to put together a pretty serious emergency meeting with all of these moving parts. I have no idea whether both ministers are available. We will try our best.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Chair, I have another technical question. In terms of the other work of the committee, would we have some time when we could discuss how we can get moving on that as well?

The Chair: We can discuss anything up until 5:30. I would just note for members of the constituency that the clerk and I have reserved Wednesday afternoon for two hours. We have not published any notice on that time period, but it's possible to do. Potentially, then, you might be able to.... You wouldn't achieve getting it done this week, but you could put this meeting over to next week.

Still, I'm taking the clear direction from the committee that this is a very high priority.

• (1630)

Ms. Pam Damoff: I would like us to try to get the systemic racism study done. I mean, if there's any way we could find the time....

I also know that witnesses who were invited to come today were unceremoniously told not to come on the Levesque study. Even moving them over to Wednesday afternoon, if that worked, would wrap up that study. Then we could return to the systemic racism report on Monday, when the House returns.

The Chair: Is there any appetite for a meeting on Wednesday?

There are multiple hands up.

Jack, you can go first.

Mr. Jack Harris: We've just had a two-hour meeting; we're hoping to have a three-hour meeting, and it's a constituency week. It's not a break week, as some members of the public have been led to believe over the years. We started calling it a "constituency week" about 10 years ago, and there are a lot of people who have demands on their time as a result of that.

Much as I would like to get the work of our committee going, I don't know if having a meeting on Wednesday and having to organize all of that, as well as doing something on Thursday or Friday for this study.... I think that if the Minister of Health and the Minister of Public Safety are attuned to the emergency that is being presented, they should make themselves available, unless they already have major commitments that can't be changed.

I would hope that at some point we could have a closer look at our schedule, Chair, because I too think we have to prioritize the committee's report on systemic racism. We've already started considering it, but we haven't any other meetings scheduled to do that. I would think that ought to be a priority of our committee as soon as we can get to it, until we have it done, because we put in a lot of time on that. We've been at it since last July. It's a matter of extreme importance to this country, and we need to give it priority. Expecting us to have three meetings this week is probably not realistic.

The Chair: Madame Michaud, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: I'm not sure I've understood: Are we sitting for two hours on Wednesday, if possible on the emergency motion, are we spending those two hours on something else, or are we putting it off until Monday?

[*English*]

The Chair: There was no translation of what you just said, Madame Michaud.

Okay. It's there now. That's good.

Do you want to repeat yourself, please?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: You said you had set aside a slot this Wednesday. If it's possible to devote it to the emergency motion, that would be ideal, but what are the options if it's not possible? Are we putting this off until next week or are we taking the time available on Wednesday to continue other studies? I'm somewhat of the same opinion as Mr. Harris. It's a constituency week, there are a number of things on the agenda, but I think we could take the time to debate an emergency motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: All I was saying, just for a point of clarification, was that because time has been so precious and so difficult to set aside, we had set aside some time on Wednesday afternoon for a potential meeting. Jack makes a good point that three meetings in one week is a bit rich, but having said that, there is also no assurance that we can pull off this emergency meeting this week.

I'm hesitant to let go of what is precious committee time in those circumstances. If we are not able to arrange this three-hour emergency meeting this week, is there any appetite on the part of the committee to use the two hours to either finish off the Levesque study or do something else?

I was just canvassing. There is nothing fixed or firm here.

Madame Stubbs.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thanks, Chair.

Just on one point of clarification for a previous study, did you accept the concept of that 15-minute time allotment for presenters?

The Chair: Yes, that's fine. Well, I accepted it, which is to say I got no push-back or resistance. We're going to be hard pressed to get all the rounds of questions in at the best of times.

• (1635)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Yes. I just wanted to make sure that part had been wrapped up.

Also, just as a general comment, it ought to go without saying that Conservatives certainly want to complete the study about Marylène Levesque, who was murdered while an offender was out on parole, because it was a Conservative initiative to extend that study to have further meetings. I know that certainly the Bloc member on our committee is deeply concerned, as are we all, with completing that work.

Conservatives also supported—in the very beginning, when all of us joined this committee as new members—the prioritized completion of the study on the RCMP. As has been mentioned, that report has already been completed and is now in the revision and report and recommendations stage.

Through our actions on both of these issues, Conservatives have clearly demonstrated our commitment to these as priority matters for our committee. The key thing is probably just to make sure we're booking meetings when we're all available, which was part and parcel of the discussion we were having yesterday. I guess we can continue to have that conversation as we figure out the schedule, but certainly know that there is no opposition to the actual content or idea of completing this crucial work sooner rather than later. We agree.

I feel for you, Chair, with all the time interventions, the voting interventions and all that has happened with our scheduled meetings.

The Chair: I'm truly touched.

I see that Mr. Harris's "raise hand" function is on permanent raise.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you. It's raised for a particular purpose, Chair. I want to say that on Wednesday, there's a significant commitment that cannot be changed. Nor can a sub be provided, because there's a caucus meeting between 1:00 and 2:30 p.m. Eastern standard time. My ability would be limited.

The Chair: Unless other people have comments, the clerk and I will do our best to pull this meeting together this week, if for no other reason than to make sure we can get back to regular business, if you will, next week.

We also realize that this is a bit of a high-risk enterprise, because pulling together a meeting of this magnitude with this number of officials and a couple of ministers is going to require some clerk magic. I don't know that we'll be able to pull it off. I'm saying to committee members that we risk not having any other meetings this week if in fact we can't pull this one off, having let go of Wednesday's time slot.

There we are.

Ms. Pam Damoff: John, can I just speak to that? We have missed so many meetings because of votes, on both Mondays and Wednesdays. I think our committee is a bit unique in this. I'm sure there are other committees that meet on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, but certainly we've been hit with having to miss numerous meetings. If for some reason the clerk and you are unable to get the ministers this week, I would be in favour of going ahead with the meeting on Wednesday afternoon, from 3:30 to 5:30.

To Jack's point, their caucus is over at 2:30, I think he said. That would still give an hour between that and a 3:30 meeting. I would be in favour of doing one if we couldn't get the ministers. If we can get the ministers, then obviously that's a priority.

Our witnesses were prepared to present on Levesque today, so they're ready to go.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Of course, because there was no consultation, the actual proponents of the motion—the Conservatives and our Bloc member—were not available for that, as we discussed yesterday, Pam.

The Chair: Not to comment on that, but would you be available on Wednesday?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: What I've said is that I think we should have a discussion with all members to ensure that everybody's available to participate. I can't speak on behalf of the other members right at this very moment.

• (1640)

The Chair: It looks as though they're all present.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: I'm sorry. I thought you meant for Wednesday.

The Chair: Yes, it's for Wednesday.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Jack literally just said he has a conflict.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Is it the case, then, that the ministers can't come Wednesday? I'm confused. I think everybody will make themselves available for a minister. I think we should all make ourselves available for this work. We want to get down to work here. We need to have a meeting this week. If we have time on Wednesday and the ministers can't come, then, if the regular members of the committee can't make it, they get a sub. We have to do that all the time. We never consult to make sure everybody's available for a certain meeting time.

The Chair: Well, I hear crickets on that.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: I'm sorry, Chair. It's probably because we actually have to all check our calendars.

Mr. Jack Harris: Chair, are we left up in the air here now? It's up to the chair to call a meeting and be all—

The Chair: —and bear another public flogging, in private?

Mr. Jack Harris: You had a private one once.

The Chair: Did I have a private flogging?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: It was in private, except—you know, since a couple of jabs were taken here in public.... I want to clarify that I wouldn't have raised it had it happened in private. Thanks.

The Chair: Just to clarify the clarification, the call of the chair is the call of the chair and is not dependent upon the unanimity or even the majority of the committee. However, I prefer—

Mr. Jack Harris: Having had such a collaborative meeting today, Chair, I wouldn't spoil it if I were you.

The Chair: I know. It wound its way to collaboration at the end. It was just painful to watch.

Let's get cracking on this emergency meeting. I will talk to the clerk and see how realistic this whole thing is.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Okay. Thanks so much, Chair.

The Chair: Keep watching those emails.

The meeting is adjourned.

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