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Special Committee on the Canada–People’s Republic of China Relationship

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Monday, June 13, 2022

Chair: Mr. Ken Hardie



Special Committee on the Canada–People’s Republic of China Relationship

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• (1835)

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Miriam Burke): Honourable members of the committee, I see quorum, and I believe we're ready to begin.

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

We'll now proceed to the election of the chair.

Pursuant to the order adopted by the House on Monday, May 16, 2022, the chair must be a member of the government party.

I'm ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Clerk.

I nominate Ken Hardie.

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried, and Mr. Hardie duly elected chair of the committee.

I invite Mr. Hardie to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): I'd like to thank the academy.

If the committee is in agreement, I'd like to invite the clerk to proceed with the election of our vice-chairs.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Pursuant to the order adopted by the House on Monday, May 16, 2022, there shall be one vice-chair from each of the recognized parties.

I'm now prepared to receive motions for vice-chair from the official opposition.

Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): I nominate Michael Chong as vice-chair from the official opposition.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. Dancho that Mr. Chong be elected as vice-chair of the committee from the official opposition.

Are there further motions

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Has that been adopted, Mr. Chair?

I'd like to nominate Mr. Stéphane Bergeron as vice-chair for the Bloc Québécois.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'll need to get my headset on.

The Clerk: He's nominating Mr. Bergeron. We'll do the election for the Bloc afterwards.

The Chair: We have you looked after, sir.

The Clerk: Is it the will of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried, and Mr. Chong duly elected vice-chair of the committee from the official opposition.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, I'd like to nominate Stéphane Bergeron as vice-chair for the Bloc Québécois.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe that Mr. Bergeron be elected as vice-chair of the committee for the Bloc Québécois. Is it the will of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried, and Mr. Bergeron duly elected Bloc Québécois vice-chair of the committee.

[*English*]

I'm prepared to receive motions for the vice-chair from the NDP.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): I am very pleased to nominate Heather McPherson as vice-chair from the New Democratic Party.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Oliphant that Ms. McPherson be elected as vice-chair of the committee from the NDP.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried, and Ms. McPherson duly elected NDP vice-chair of the committee.

Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Clerk.

I think we are blessed with one of the very experienced clerks on the Hill, who will be undoubtedly invaluable to the person sitting in this chair over the next little while.

We'll do some of the official stuff first, and then get into the routine motions.

Welcome to meeting number one of the House of Commons Special Committee on the Canada–People's Republic of China Relationship.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. Regarding the speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether participating virtually or in person.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants in this meeting that screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website.

I would like to remind all of those present in the room to please follow the recommendations from public health authorities, as well as the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on October 19, 2021, to remain healthy and safe. As the chair, I will be enforcing these measures for the duration of the meeting, or for as long as the measures themselves last, he hastens to add, and I thank members in advance for their co-operation.

Should any technical challenges arise, please advise me, so that we can suspend a few moments to ensure all members are able to participate fully.

Those are a few formalities out of the way, but I wanted to add a quick note that I've been interested in this committee since it was first struck, living on the west coast as I do, and as does the honourable member for South Surrey—White Roc. We're kind of at ground zero for many of the concerns, especially the domestic concerns about our relationship with China.

It has been very interesting to watch the proceedings from the last Parliament, to see the work that the committee had done, because it resonates very well with what I've noticed over time. There may be times, in fact, when I will regret being here and being unable to ask some questions to try to coax out a little more information on what is, I think, as has been pointed out many times, a very complex relationship. There are upsides and downsides to it. As a group, we'll accentuate the positive, but deal something with the other.

With that, I suggest the next order of business be that the committee now proceed to consider its routine motions. In preparation for this, the committee clerk has circulated a list of routine motions that committees have typically adopted. As we go along, the com-

mittee clerk can also answer any questions about the routine motions that you may have.

It's customary that somebody on the government side take the lead, leading us through the routine motions.

Mr. Oliphant.

• (1840)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I don't have to do them all, but I'm happy to start.

We'll begin with the one with respect to 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: I suspect that some of these routine motions may be subject to further discussion, so perhaps it would be best if we indicated our approval of each one individually as we go through.

All those in favour of analyst services?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: In the six years that I've been here, I have nothing but total awe and respect for the analysts to absorb all of the things they hear and then turn out some pretty wonderful studies that we can present to Parliament and consider for ourselves.

Thank you, Brendan. It's good to have you on board.

Shall we continue?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Yes.

This is the second routine motion:

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

[*English*]

The Chair: Sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, I would like to amend the motion and replace the text that my honourable colleague has just read with the following text:

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

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there any comments?

Mr. Oliphant.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Could you explain this to me?

You are asking that the subcommittee be composed of five persons rather than four?

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes, there would indeed be five people, the chair, three vice-chairs and one member from each recognized party. We also ask that the subcommittee work in a spirit of collaboration.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: What is the difference between the two motions?

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, we are setting the number of people who will serve on the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure at five.

• (1845)

[English]

The Chair: Okay. Do we have that written down?

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): It's oral.

The Chair: It's oral. I know it's oral.

That's a firm grasp of the obvious there, Mr. Chong.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, would you like me to send it to the clerk right away so she can send it to everyone?

I sincerely believe that this is a formality and that we could pass it right now and move on.

[English]

The Chair: Do we have it?

The suggestion is made that we simply adopt this, same as damn is to swearing to you, to use an old expression.

The Chair: Would you move that then, sir?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Chair, if it's too complicated for everyone, I don't mind withdrawing it, because it's a formality that I was asked to propose to you. It makes no difference to me. It is a formality that my party recommends every time a new committee is created.

[English]

The Chair: Does everybody understand the motion, or do we need to read it out? We do have the text here.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Chair, I understood what my colleague read.

The Chair: Okay.

The motion is:

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.

That's it. Can we say that's accepted? Are we good?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Are you ready for the third one, Mr. Chair?

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

The Chair: Everybody's heard the motion. Is there any comment?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: I'd like to present the next routine motion on time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses. I understand that there's likely not going to be support for this, but I do want to read it out to make a point in the hope that members will consider it for a future committee or in the next Parliament.

Let me read out my proposed routine motion for the rounds:

The Chair shall divide equitably, among all the other members of the committee, the time available for questioning a witness appearing before the committee, providing that a member may share or transfer his or her time to another member.

Mr. Chair, the whole reason for presenting this motion is that it would divide the time remaining after opening witness statements equitably amongst the 11 members of the committee. There are five members of the committee from the ministerial party. There are four from the official opposition party. There's one from the Bloc Québécois, and there's one from the New Democratic Party.

My observation, Mr. Chair, has been that the routine motion that has been adopted in other committees, which is very different from this one, effectively means that two members of this committee get 45% of the time on most committees, simply because we often have two one-hour panels and, once you get through that opening round of 24 minutes, then you have turns of five, five, two and a half and two and a half minutes. Effectively, two members of this committee get 45% of the time after two one-hour panels are completed. That means that the remaining nine members of this committee are left dividing up approximately 55% of the time.

I don't think that's equitable or fair. I think that simply taking the time remaining for questions and comments after opening witness statements and dividing it by 11 members, with those members who wish to do so yielding the floor to another member of the committee, is a far more equitable way to divide the time.

I hope it's adopted, but if it's not, I hope members will think about it and potentially have it adopted as a routine motion at a future first meeting of a committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1850)

The Chair: Are there questions or comments?

Go ahead, Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I want to thank Mr. Chong for that. I think he's raising an important point. My concern would be that I'm not sure we're ready to be trial committee for this system. We think there should be discussion among all the committees about how it would work.

On the substance of it, I think there are two values. One is that each one of us is here as an individual member of Parliament coming from the House of Commons to a committee, but at the same time, we're also here as a team, so we present a party point of view.

Mr. Chong's motion helps with the first part about the individuals each having equal time, but it takes away from the concept of its being a team effort where we would then sacrifice somewhat to the smaller teams for them to have "team time", we'd call it.

At this point, we would not support this motion but would prefer the usual routine motion.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: Very quickly, because I don't want to waste any time on this, to demonstrate how it would work, Mr. Chair, let's say we had a one-hour panel with one witness. That witness would be given five minutes for their opening remarks. There would remain 55 minutes in that hour remaining after the witness gave their opening testimony. The chair would take the 55 minutes, divide it by 11, and each member would be accorded 5 minutes for their questions and comments. If a member isn't interested in taking their time, they could yield the floor to any one of the other 10 members on the committee, whether it's their recognized party or not.

If, for example—and I'll finish with this—it were a single panel of 120 minutes, and let's say there were two opening witnesses statements, there would remain approximately 110 minutes in the rounds for questions and comments. That would be divided by 11, and each member would get 10 minutes for questions and comments to a witness, with those members who don't wish to use their time yielding the floor to another member of the committee.

That's how this system would work if this routine motion were to be adopted, and I'll finish there, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also thank Mr. Chong for bringing this forward.

Obviously, we all feel that the constituents we represent—as New Democrats, Bloc Québécois, Liberals or Conservatives—deserve to also have a voice in this place. While I don't have other colleagues on this committee with me, I think that people in Canada who voted for New Democrats want to have their voices heard.

I wouldn't support this motion. I think there is something to be said about having that opportunity for different perspectives to be shared, not just as individuals, but as parties, and being able to have that time and that space to prioritize those things that are important to our party protects the values that our party represents as well.

• (1855)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I would like to add to what my NDP colleague Ms. McPherson just said. The current motion already allows members to split the time available to question a witness. So I would be happy to see the current motion remain as it is, and have the Conservatives share their time with me.

I support what Ms. McPherson just said. I just wanted to add my two cents.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant, did you want to speak? No.

Are there any further comments?

We should vote. I'll read the motion again:

The chair shall divide equitably, among all of the other members of the committee, the time available for questioning a witness appearing before the committee, provided that a member may share or transfer his or her time to another member.

(Motion negated)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I might present the next routine motion. I'm not quite sure how to do it, because I would like to amend the routine motion slightly to follow the model that we had in the last Parliament for this committee.

I'll explain it before I move the motion, which is not really good procedure. The last time, we gave the chair the authorization to adjust the time of the opening statement, in consultation with the vice-chairs.

That was to allow discretion, because there could be some times when we have one witness and instead of giving them five minutes, we gave them 10, because that could be useful. Other times, using your discretion, it could be five minutes or seven minutes, or whatever. It worked well, I think, in the last Parliament for this committee.

What I will do is read it with that change in it. It would read:

That witnesses be given five minutes to make their opening statement; and that the Chair be authorized to adjust the time of the opening statement, in consultation with the vice-chairs; that whenever possible, witnesses provide the committee with their opening statement 72 hours in advance; 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 of questioning, 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 half minutes

Conservative Party, five minutes

Liberal Party, five minutes.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Chair, I'll take over for the next few and then I'll yield to Ms. Yip. That's an early warning, I guess.

Regarding document distribution:

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

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: This is a really important one. Regarding working meals:

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

The Chair: Who would object to that? I'm sorry. What I just said is not official.

Is there any discussion?

Are all in favour? Are any opposed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: The next one 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; and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

• (1900)

The Chair: Are there any comments?

Mr. Oliphant.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I think there is a problem with the translation. In my opinion, it has been cut and pasted. It is a translation of the other motion. I think the clerk is aware of the problem.

[*English*]

The Chair: Do we have a solution for this?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: He read it, so it's fine.

The Chair: Are all in favour? Are any opposed?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I'll continue:

[*Translation*]

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*]

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I believe "House officer" is a euphemism for "the whip", is it not?

The Chair: We called him that to be polite.

The clerk advises me that "House officer" could also include the House leader's office. Which do we prefer? Let's make this a little bit simpler.

Are any opposed?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I'll continue:

[*Translation*]

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; and that the analysts assigned to the committee also have access to the in camera transcripts.

[*English*]

In our previous committee, we did not authorize the analysts to access in camera transcripts.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Frankly, we think that is dumb.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: We thought it was bizarre, so we're suggesting that the opposite happen here.

The Chair: You're suggesting that the routine motion as you read it be the one that stands, without the additional cutting out of the analyst. Is that correct?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Yes.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Chair, none of us can remember why the analysts were not allowed to have access to the transcripts of in camera meetings. We can't remember why and we think it was probably not a good reason. We think the analysts should have access to in camera transcripts.

The Chair: That's the motion.

Are any opposed?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Just before I pass it off to Ms. Yip, this is on notice of motion:

That a 48-hour notice, interpreted as two nights, be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, provided that: (a) the notice be filed with the clerk of the committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; (b) the motion be distributed to Members and the offices of the whips of each recognized party in both official languages by the clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour; (c) notice 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 motion may be moved.

I hope I read that in a way that helped the translators.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any comments? Are any opposed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Ms. Yip.

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): I'll just carry on with the motion on technical tests for witnesses:

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 advise the committee, at the start of each meeting, of any witness who did not perform the required technical tests.

• (1905)

The Chair: I believe we jumped over one, but we can handle this one now and then go back to the other.

Voices: We're not going to get at the bills. The other one's not necessary to move forward yet.

The Chair: Oh, it's not considered....

Voices: We're suggesting that we not move it forward on purpose.

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I simply propose to add the following title to this motion: Technical tests for witnesses.

[*English*]

The Chair: Very good. Thank you. Is there any comment on that? Is anyone opposed?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Again, are any opposed to the motion as amended?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Jean Yip: On linguistic review:

That all documents submitted for committee business that do not come from a federal department or members' offices, 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.

That all meetings, other than those deemed in camera, be televised or, if that is not possible, then webcast.

The Chair: I think we jumped to an additional one there. Those are two different ones, although they look to be the same the way they're laid out on the paper here. The first part, prior to the part on television or webcasting, is what we'll consider now.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you had your hand up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: This relates to the motion that was to follow. I would like to add the following title: Linguistic review.

We like titles in my party.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right. Are we all good with that?

(Amendment agreed to)

A voice: Don't we want to carry the motion?

The Chair: I thought we did. Shall this motion as amended carry?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

Ms. Yip, is this the final one?

Ms. Jean Yip: No, I think there's a....

The Chair: Was it all together? Was that all one motion?

Hon. Michael Chong: No, I'll read the final one.

It's titled "Television and Webcast".

Ms. Jean Yip: I'm sorry, but I don't have that.

Hon. Michael Chong: It reads:

That all meetings, other than those deemed in camera, be televised or, if that is not possible, then webcast.

The Chair: It looks like they go together, but they're actually different.

All right. Are there any difficulties with this one? Are there any comments or questions? All those opposed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Just as a point of clarification, and in deference to our friend from the Bloc, should we have a title for this one?

Hon. Michael Chong: I read the title.

The Chair: Oh, you read the title. Do you have the title on your piece of paper?

Hon. Michael Chong: I expressed the title orally.

The Chair: You did: "Television and Webcast".

A voice: He just came up with all by himself.

The Chair: It took him all day, but there we are. Thank you.

So that, I guess, dispenses with our routine motions. Is there any other business that we wish to launch into?

Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: With respect to future business and the work of the committee, I would like to suggest that we set a date today to receive notices of motion from all members of the committee, one that gives us a reasonable amount of time, because we're at the end of the session. I don't think it's on our minds, right now. We set a date—I'm happy for anyone to come up with that date—for us to begin our work in September.

That would give us some time to look at the ongoing issues and come up with perhaps 10 things, put them in a hopper, and try to come up with a good first couple of studies. We'd probably end up doing two studies, one to get going and a spare study when that one's not going.

I've got seven or eight motions ready to go, if we needed them. I'd sooner wait to do that, and put them all in and take the wisdom from everybody. If that's agreed to on consensus tonight, we would not entertain notices of motion. I look to the analysts and clerk for a suggestion about the best date—something reasonable for you to work with, over the summer.

I know the House is calming down and we'll be back the third week of September, but if we had a bit of work done before then, we could get going at the first meeting, once the House resumes.

• (1910)

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree with that recommendation and would love to hear the date the clerk would recommend for that.

I do wonder whether the subcommittee should meet prior to the first meeting, perhaps so we could make that decision.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just so we're clear here.... I don't quite understand. I think Mr. Oliphant suggested we all submit ideas or motions for various studies the committee could undertake before—

A voice: August 15.

Hon. Michael Chong: Okay. Then, Mr. Chair, the idea is that the subcommittee would meet, after that point, to talk about the committee agenda for the fall sitting. Is that the idea? Would we have our first meeting with witnesses when we get back in September or would we have, Mr. Chair, an organizational meeting?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Chong, I would suggest we need an organizational meeting, because we're going to have to agree on it, unless we think we could do that virtually. However, I think there's an issue around virtual meetings. If we have a special meeting before the House resumes, it has to be in person. Am I right?

I'm getting a nod from the clerk. We're not allowed to have virtual meetings between now and when the House resumes on September 19. I would think we'd probably want to wait until some time in September.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, just so that I understand, I think what's being proposed here—which sounds good to me—is that members would submit motions for ideas for studies some time before the middle of August, and discussions would take place among members informally before our first committee meeting in September. At that first committee meeting in September, we would have an organizational meeting, where we can hopefully come to a quick agreement on the committee's work plan for the fall sitting.

Mr. Chair, is that your understanding, as well, or am I missing something here?

The Chair: That's what I understood.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I will just clarify that official virtual meetings can't happen after June 23, because the provision for hybrid sittings ends as of the 23rd. If we wanted to make it more of an official meeting, there would also be, I think, an issue with Parliament's resources—translation, and so on. There might be difficulties with holding a meeting prior to the House's coming back on September 19. This doesn't mean that you couldn't get together informally and have a discussion.

This also, by the way, raises another issue: In other committees I've been on, we've always created a subcommittee. The subcommittee goes off and does its work, and that work is brought back to the whole committee, and the whole committee does that work all over again. On those other committees, we actually dispensed with the subcommittee, because everybody wanted to be on it. That's just a thought. I think it's probably worth a test fly to see if that approach will work for us, because it would certainly be, I think, a more efficient use of our time—the whole committee getting together and ready to go.

Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I don't want to look stupid, but, as I am new, I don't have as much experience as my honourable colleagues.

It seems to me that the committee has scheduled a meeting for next week. In that case, I do not understand why we should wait until mid-August to discuss the motions. Personally, I was ready to do so today. I was about to table three motions, but I was waiting for my friend Mr. Oliphant to make his proposals.

Personally, I am prepared to table motions. There is a meeting of the committee next week. So I see no reason why we should not take advantage of that two-hour period, during which the resources of the House will be available as planned. I think it would be disrespectful to the duties we perform. We are paid to work and there is a sitting next week. I am prepared to table motions tonight. If there are others, we will discuss them next week.

I do not understand why we are already talking about the end of the session when we have two hours of work ahead of us next week. I do not know whether my honourable colleagues have any comments to make on that. Personally, I am ready to start now. We have to agree now, so that we can save time. Otherwise, we will lose two hours next week. I'm not sure I understand that.

Mr. Oliphant could explain it to me.

[*English*]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: My thinking is that we have work that is ongoing at the subcommittee on international human rights. We have work that's going on at the foreign affairs committee. I think we might want the foreign affairs committee to transfer a piece of work to our committee that takes a little bit of negotiation—on Taiwan, for instance.

If we can look at what everybody has in mind, I think we'll see that it's going to take more than a week to do that. I know we have notices of motion from Monsieur Bergeron, but I have no idea really what's in the mind of the other parties. I'm not even sure it's in the mind of my colleagues here.

My sense is that we take our time to do this right. We would still need a meeting to approve the subcommittee report anyway, but I'm open. I don't know, but Mr. Chong might have an idea.

The Chair: Mr. Chong.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Chong: The reason I want to make a decision in early September is that the government has announced that it will bring forward a strategy for the Indo-Pacific region. If the government brings forward that strategy before the beginning of September, our committee could review that strategy; it could spend four or five meetings on it. However, if we make a decision now on Mr. Bergeron's proposal, it will not be possible to do so before the end of November or the end of December. That is one of the reasons why I want to wait until September to make a decision.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would just add that, considering the shortness of time before the end of this parliamentary session, we would want to have this committee be in a place so that we could be responsive to current events that conceivably will take place during the following three months.

Since we are not meeting for about three months, I wouldn't want to determine a work plan in June that may be inappropriate in September and October.

The Chair: Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: My colleagues raise some very good points. However, some things are certain.

For example, Mr. Oliphant mentioned Taiwan. By the way, with regard to the Subcommittee on International Human Rights, which Mr. Oliphant was talking about, the meeting was supposed to take place on Tuesday, but it was cancelled this week. In my view, we can stop talking about it.

As to what is going to happen over the next three months, there's one study that everyone wants to talk about, which is the one on Taiwan. Mr. Oliphant said that and I think that's pretty clear.

There is also the fact that we heard evidence, but our study was not completed, because of the elections. We never wrote a report based on the testimony we received. I think this is a priority of the committee and it does not change what is going to happen in the next three months.

In terms of what happens next, I may not have the opportunity to table my three motions. However, I believe that two of them will garner unanimity in the committee, and I would like to table them today. Then we would not have to adopt seven, eight or nine motions. As Ms. McPherson and Mr. Chong said, we can wait for the

next three months. However, I would already table at least two of my motions, which have been circulated to the members of the committee. I am convinced that they will be unanimously supported. So we will not have worked for nothing.

• (1920)

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I think there is no problem with having a meeting next week, if that is the will of the committee, to discuss the schedule of this committee in the fall.

[*English*]

I don't have a problem with meeting next week to talk about a potential schedule if there's an agreement about doing some things in September, provided we don't lock in the entire fall sitting. I'm open to meeting next week to see if there's a consensus among members.

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I would say that's in the purview of this subcommittee. Discussions of scheduling always has been. I've come across this before where sometimes at committee the idea of the whole committee discussing a schedule happens. I don't find it to be that effective. We should leave that to the subcommittee. I understand that my colleague raises the idea in good faith, but based on experience, there are other ways of doing it, and the subcommittee ought to take it up.

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I think there will be unanimity on having a discussion and study on Taiwan. My concern is that the study that was done in the previous Parliament, I would say, is out of date.

Many things have happened, including in the last three weeks, in the straits, as well as in the area around Taiwan. The foreign affairs committee has also had one meeting on Taiwan that is a bit more up to date, and the testimony could be transferred to this committee.

However, I don't think that the meetings we had in the previous Parliament are completely relevant right now. Things have especially changed on the security front, even in the last five days.

We need to go at it cautiously and carefully, and ensure that we're doing this study at the right time. We also need to ensure that every member of the committee has a chance to put forward ideas.

I'm still not in favour of our adopting a work plan tonight. Anyone can always move a motion, but in the spirit of collaboration, it would be much better if we work together and put everything into one batch of motions and have the subcommittee sort it out.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Dubourg.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think the comments made by my colleagues are all valid, indeed. I want to say to my colleague Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe that it is true that we have just adopted the routine motions requiring that we table motions 48 hours in advance. However, under the proposal currently on the table, made by Mr. Oliphant, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe may table his motions today or next week.

The objective behind this is for the subcommittee to have all these motions so that it can prioritize them and then propose a work plan to the committee as a whole. This does not mean that the important motions that Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe wants to bring forward will not be analyzed.

Given what may actually happen over the summer, the key is that all parties table all their motions and we do this work once and for all based on the priorities that will have been established.

That's it, Mr. Chair.

• (1925)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I want you to know that I always do this in a spirit of collaboration, as everyone knows.

The fantastic thing about committees is that even if its members have started a study, they can suspend it to start another one if there is a priority that they haven't seen coming because of holidays, for example. The committee is sovereign. It's very simple.

Let me take the example of Mr. Chong, who was telling us that an Indo-Pacific strategy will be proposed by the government. At that point, if we have already started a study, we may well decide to suspend it to comply with the new motion that will be put on the table, probably by Mr. Chong. That's how collaboration works too.

What I find a bit disturbing is that we will have a meeting next week, but we will only discuss the schedule in September. That doesn't work. What are we going to say to each other next week? Are we going to play cards?

I think we should be talking about potential motions that can already be tabled. Everyone can do their job. We will work collaboratively in subcommittee.

I reiterate that if something ever happens in the news that we need to address quickly, then we will suspend the current motion and start on the new motion. The committee is sovereign. It is very easy to do that.

I propose to table my motions today, which are the two motions I have told you about. I can wait to table the third one. Then we will do what we want with it, we will discuss it next week. We will work as any good member of Parliament should work in a committee meeting.

So I move to table two motions, Mr. Chairman. You should know that I am replacing Mr. Stéphane Bergeron, from whom I have received extremely specific instructions. So my friend Mr. Bergeron

will be very pleased that I am tabling these motions on his behalf in the special committee.

[English]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

We cannot have two motions moved. I would ask that you ask the member to choose one.

I would note that there has been no discussion between Mr. Bergeron and any member of this committee that I know of about these motions. There's an assumption that there will be unanimity, which is not the case. If it is in the spirit of collaboration, I would suggest that it is best....

Frankly, I'm very disturbed when someone assumes that we are not doing our jobs as members of Parliament and only one person is. I don't think the way to start this committee is to assume that one is a member of Parliament and doing their job, and we're not. Some of us have not had time to prepare motions.

The point of order is that there should be one motion presented by a member at a time. That's the way the rules of order in this House of Commons and all of the standing committees work.

Thank you.

The Chair: If I could offer something, we have an opportunity through the presentation of motions to develop a landscape of the things that we see as important and worthy of our consideration. The scheduling and stages of when we talk about them can certainly be up to the subcommittee. Between now and the date that we've picked, August 15, the field is open for people to submit as many motions as they see fit.

What I detect—and I can stand to be corrected—is that there's a sentiment that if we accept a motion now, we've nailed it down to the schedule and it's going to be first. Based on what we've seen with the changing situation in the relationship with China, I think that's probably not prudent at this point. It's unnecessary, given that we're not going to have any substantive work on it anyway for some period of time.

In other committees, we've adopted a fairly open approach to bringing forward all motions. Bring them in. Put them into the hopper. Let's see what the interests of the committee in total are and leave it to the subcommittee—or the whole committee, as we see fit—to determine the sequencing of these motions.

It's also been a practice at the committees I've been on that we spread it around. We'll take a motion from the Bloc and then a motion from the Conservatives, the Liberals and the NDP, so that each of us in turn has an opportunity to marshal the committee's energies behind a certain subject or study.

As chair, I'll make a suggestion that we invite motions, put them on the table and put them into that landscape that we're creating in order to find out what the interests of the committee might be.

Are there any thoughts on that?

Go ahead, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

• (1930)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: That's fine with me. You have summed up my thinking very well.

I would still like to come back to Mr. Oliphant's point of order. I did not assume that he was not doing his job when I pointed out that there would be no meeting next week when the resources of the House would be available. I thought that reflected an unwillingness to work, but it was certainly not directed at Mr. Oliphant. I know that he is a hard-working man with a good reputation. It would be a great pity if we got off on the wrong foot.

That said, you should know that if two hours are available for a session to be held, but we do not use them, that is, in my opinion, a failure to do our job. I am not saying that no one works hard here. However, if we have two hours but we do not use them, I am not sure that our citizens are very happy. That's all I have to say about that.

On the other hand, I appreciated your comment, Mr. Chair. I do think it would be a good idea to give everyone time to draft their motions. As you can see, I am able to work collaboratively. They should at least be tabled and sent out by the time we meet next week.

Is this suitable to you?

[*English*]

The Chair: One thing we should probably try to confirm is whether we do indeed have meeting time available to us next week with the resources of the House.

Madam Clerk?

The Clerk: I think we do.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Chong: I would like to get a clarification, Mr. Chair. Is this a subcommittee meeting or a committee meeting?

[*English*]

Is the proposal to meet as a subcommittee next week or to meet as a committee?

The Chair: I would suggest that we meet as a committee, so each and every one of us who has an interest they'd like to see fleshed out in a study has that opportunity to present a motion.

Are there any other thoughts on that?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Frankly, we have, I think, eight notices of motion ready to go, which I have not done because I wanted to discuss them with colleagues. We have six motions for possible studies. We can present them all, but I would like us to look at them all and try to have a discussion about what is best. I think you need to think about how you start a study, how you scope it out and what it could be in terms of a project, as opposed to rushing to do a study. The results will be as good as the effort that's put into it.

We can put these all in and we'll have notices of motion and they can be discussed next week. They can all be moved next week as well, but I'm not sure that's the best way to work. We could end up having one motion presented, as we are doing in the foreign affairs

committee, and it could go on. It has now gone on for four weeks on one motion. I don't want that to happen here.

I'd like us to actually have a round table, almost a committee-of-the-whole discussion about what we want to do and how we're going to do it. I think it would be healthier and that would be a good way to do it.

The Chair: Back on the Prairies, we used to enjoy potluck dinners where everybody brought their specialty and we all enjoyed a piece of it.

I would suggest that if next week's meeting was our opportunity to bring our pot of motions along, we could lay them all on the table and ask questions of each other about what is meant and where we think we're going with a proposed study, etc. Mr. Oliphant, that could be the collaborative approach that then informs how we sequence the studies that need to be done.

Remember, though, that this relationship with China is complicated and variable. It changes very quickly, as we've seen so many times. What we may discuss next week might be quite substantially out the window by the time fall comes. We always have to allow for that dynamic.

Yes, Mr. Fragiskatos, save me here.

• (1935)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: You don't need saving; you never have.

The way I see things going is as follows. Say that we met next week as a committee, would we decide which particular studies we would take up three months after the fact? That's my worry. As you just said, it is a very fluid relationship that Canada has with China, to put it mildly. I'm not sure how good that would be for this committee to take up. I don't see the utility of that.

If we get together and exchange ideas, I suppose that's all well and good as far as getting to know each other better is concerned, and hearing out what the various MPs on the committee would want to pursue as far as future studies go, but I don't know if that would be the best use of our time.

Again, we would meet next week. Parliament is adjourning shortly, as we know. Then we will meet three months later to take up a study that might be out of date entirely. There might be much more pressing situations to take up at that time.

That's my concern.

The Chair: Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have an idea to try to get things moving along here. I have heard from Mr. Oliphant as well as Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe

[*Translation*]

Both Mr. Oliphant and Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe have expressed a desire to study the Taiwan case. This is clearly the case, given that Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe has submitted a notice of motion regarding Taiwan and Mr. Oliphant has indicated a desire to study the issue.

[*English*]

Perhaps next week we could agree to study Taiwan when we come back in September, with the proviso that if other urgent matters come up, the study would be suspended to deal with them at that time. We could always continue the Taiwan study after whatever urgent matter has been disposed of.

Perhaps we could come to next week's meeting with an idea of how many meetings we would have on Taiwan. I know the notice of motion that Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe has presented is suggesting six meetings. If we could arrive at a consensus on the number of meetings we would have, then at least the clerks and analysts over the summer could prepare at least two or three meetings for when we come back so we could hit the ground running.

I would be supportive of doing that if there were a consensus on the committee. I'm trying to help things along here so that we can get a consensus.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Is there an appetite then to have Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe make the motion and for us to handle that?

I see no objections, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I do have some concerns about it, because it is referring to a previous Parliament.

Is it in the motion? I read the motion.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, the second motion that concerns Taiwan does not refer to the previous Parliament.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: The motion that was given is one motion. It's not three motions. It's a notice of motion.

It's one motion. It has three parts. It continues and—

• (1940)

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant, do you have something further to add?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Well, I have no trouble with.... I mean that our second motion that we would be presenting is about Taiwan. The first one is about a kickoff with officials to give us the lay of the land. We would bring in the acting ambassador, the chargé d'affaires and the China desk. We would bring in the key officials to give us an in camera briefing on what we need to know about everything to get us going.

That would be our first idea of what we'd do. Second, we believe our first substantial study should probably be on Taiwan, with the caveat that if the Indo-Pacific strategy wants to take precedence over that because it emerges, then I'll be interested, just as you will be. That would be good.

We have no trouble with the concept of this. We're just trying to find a way to do it that is fair to the analysts, to make sure they

have time to prepare and to scope out a study. What are we talking about on Taiwan? Are we talking about multilateral engagement, such as at the WHO and other places? Are we talking about peace and security issues, and the buzzing around? Are we talking about threats to their security? Are we talking about American engagement?

There's a lot we could talk about concerning Taiwan. I'd just like it scoped out, because studying Taiwan is big. Are we talking about trade and investment? It's our biggest trading partner in that part of the world. There's a lot we could do about Taiwan. I just think we need to scope out a study.

I would agree tonight, if we could say it by consensus, to our first significant study being Taiwan and to asking the analysts to help us come up with a study on Taiwan. I would do that. That would be no dilemma whatsoever, and it would be using previous resources. I think we are agreed to do Taiwan. I just want to make sure we have flexibility.

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant, is there difficulty with the fact that there appear to be three motions collapsed into one notice of motion? Is that a technical sticking point for you?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: May I clarify one thing, Mr. Chair?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

I don't know why this ended up in one notice of motion. It's really three separate motions. I thought it was clear, but maybe there was a misunderstanding somewhere.

Personally, I would have postponed the motion on Taiwan. However, I think Mr. Oliphant's idea is a good one. He was suggesting that we ask the analysts to come up with wording for the motions that deal with the study on Taiwan. That would be fine with me if we discussed it next week.

As I was saying earlier, if something happens over the summer, which it probably will, we would drop the current motion and just move on to a new study.

In response to my Liberal colleague, every committee plans long-term studies. Even the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development provides for three- or four-month studies on situations that may change. At some point, study projects must be proposed. In any case, we have no control over the time or the terrain in countries where there are conflicts. It is the same thing in the subcommittee I just mentioned and, perhaps, in the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and in several committees. Of course, when a study is planned and the committee's schedule means that it will not take place for four months, there is a risk of changes. You can't fight against that. It's the same thing at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

I think a consensus is developing in this regard. After hearing Mr. Chong's idea, Mr. Oliphant's comments, and the chair's wise advice, I think we could ask the analysts to come up with a draft study on Taiwan that would be agreeable to everyone, so that we could discuss it at next week's meeting. We could table that motion, somehow, next week, to make sure it's on the table when we come back in September.

I don't know if that's acceptable to everyone, but I think that's pretty much the consensus around the table right now.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wasn't sure what Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe was saying, or if he wants to clarify it. I was going to make a suggestion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Oliphant and Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have some good ideas.

I don't know if Ms. McPherson wanted to do a study on Taiwan, but I think the Liberals, the Bloc and the Conservatives wanted to do one.

• (1945)

[*English*]

This is obvious. Everyone has their own good ideas. I do think Mr. Oliphant laid out a very responsible plan. I love the idea of having an intro from the officials. That sounds like a great way to kick off this committee. But I also appreciate that Mr. Brunelle-

Duceppe's team has done the hard work of already bringing forward a motion. I suggest that we have the subcommittee meet and talk about this. I think we're really getting into the weeds here.

I think you'd get a lot more done if the four of you could meet and settle on what to do. We have the time next Tuesday or Monday. I would suggest that the four of you get in a room and finalize this. Otherwise, we could be here for another 45 minutes and not get a lot done. I would suggest that this happen on Monday of next week.

The Chair: How does that look to all?

Hon. Michael Chong: That sounds great, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Do we need a motion to that effect or can we just wave a magic wand?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I think to be fair to the analyst, we should give a little bit.... If nothing is expected of the analyst by next Monday, that's fine; that's fair. If something is expected on the scope of this study, I think we have to tell him a little bit more about what we're talking about.

What I would suggest is that we don't do that tonight, but we say that we'll talk about that at that meeting and together in a circle will try to come up with how much of it do we want to do on multilateral engagement, etc. There are many topics, because we've studied Taiwan before at other committees. We could come up with something, but I think we need to be a little bit more specific before we get the analyst to prepare something, because Taiwan's a big issue.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Chair, I think that's why I suggested you meet as a subcommittee, so it's very well outlined.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Yes, let the subcommittee meet without the analyst having done the work and then we come up with something. Then the analyst can do some work over the summer, because he doesn't get holidays.

The Chair: We don't either, you know.

Does that represent to all members a reasonable agenda for a meeting next week, next Monday?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: Very good. We'll make it so.

Is there any other business?

We're adjourned.

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