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Chair: The Honourable Hedy Fry



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• (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting No. 67 of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is taking place on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people.

[*English*]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of Thursday, June 23, 2022.

While public health authorities and the Board of Internal Economy no longer require mask-wearing indoors or on the precinct, masks and respirators are still excellent tools to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases, so mask-wearing is strongly encouraged.

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

I call this meeting today pursuant to Standing Order 106(4) to discuss a request to undertake a study of the censoring of news content by Google. As required, the 106(4) request has the signatures of six members.

We will now begin by opening the floor to the members who have submitted the request for this meeting, beginning with Chris Bittle.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

In seeing the story that the Canadian Press released, it's troubling that Google was doing this in secret to begin with but was caught by the press—they asked the questions, and we found the answers. It's especially troubling in light of what Facebook did in Australia. It was an intimidation tactic by Facebook against the Australian people and an intimidation tactic against their Parliament to see if it would reverse what was going on there, which was similar to legislation we passed.

It's important for Parliament to take a look and see what Google is doing. I don't particularly like its track record on this. It's a com-

pany that has not necessarily been responsible but at the same time does not want any regulations.

I have a motion. We have provided it to the other parties, and I believe it has been emailed out to everyone. I will read it out:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study into the activities of Google in reaction to Bill C-18, including but not limited to the decision by Google to test the blocking of news sites in Canada;

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a) the committee summon Kent Walker, president of global affairs and chief legal officer of Alphabet Inc., Richard Gingras, vice-president of news at Google, and Sabrina Geremia, VP and country manager for Google in Canada to testify for a two-hour meeting on Monday, March 6, 2023;

That the committee order Alphabet Inc. and all of its subsidiaries, including Google, to provide:

(a) any and all internal or external communications (including but not limited to emails, texts or other forms of messages) related to actions it planned to take or options it considered in relation to Canada's Bill C-18, including but not limited to those in relation to the testing of the blocking of news sites in Canada;

(b) the list of all news organizations blocked by Google, in Canada; and

That this be delivered to the committee no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on Thursday, March 2.

Again, I won't go on too long. I appreciate the feedback from opposition members on this motion. It's something we need to look into. It's something that is troubling. We've seen these actions by foreign tech giants around the world. Again, it's important that the Canadian Parliament look into it and that we stand up for Canadians.

Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Chris.

I will now open debate on this. I notice that Martin has his hand up.

Go ahead, Martin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Obviously, I fully agree with the process outlined in the motion. However, I would like to make two minor corrections to the French version. They don't necessarily change the meaning of the text; the goal is to perfect its translation.

The first correction is in the second paragraph, where we ask that "the Committee summon Kent Walker" and others to testify, "de témoigner pour une réunion." We can summon a person to testify, "à témoigner", or to give testimony, "pour témoigner", but not "de témoigner." So that correction must be made.

The other little correction is a clarification. Where the motion asks for “toutes les communications internes ou externes (y compris, mais sans s’y limiter, les courriels, les textes ou d’autres formes de messages)” I propose “messages textes” instead to be clear that we are talking about text messages and not messages in general.

For the rest, I fully support my colleague’s proposed motion.

• (1110)

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Peter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I fully support the clarifications Mr. Champoux wants to make in the French text.

I also support the motion. I think it’s going in the right direction of what we must do as the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

[*English*]

What Google has done is perplexing. When it saw how things backfired in Australia around the reaction of big tech....

It is perplexing that Google would do something—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I raise a point of order, Madam Chair.

Mr. Julian, I am very sorry to interrupt you, but I’m told that the meeting is not being broadcast on ParlVU.

Mr. Clerk, can you check to see if the problem is solved?

Wait, I read that it’s been solved. It took a little time before it resolved, but everything seems to be working now. Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

I am very sorry, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: No problem, Mr. Champoux.

That said, I’d like to ask the clerk if the meeting was broadcast from the beginning.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael MacPherson): Yes, but the broadcast was not fully live. There was a delay of about 90 seconds.

Mr. Peter Julian: So that means the broadcast included Mr. Bittle tabling his motion and making his corresponding statement. That is good, because it’s important for the public to be aware of what we are discussing.

[*English*]

I was just saying that Google’s reaction of attempted intimidation is perplexing, because it didn’t work in Australia. Big tech has a social responsibility, and big tech has the responsibility to obey the laws of the country in which it is reaping huge profits.

Google’s attempt to try to censor and block certain sites is back-firing. I’ve heard more negative comments about Google in the last few days than I’ve heard in many years. It was an irresponsible act, and it is time that Google executives be brought forward to explain their actions.

This committee has been a committee that has functioned on consensus and done remarkable work. We saw that with Hockey Canada. It was a similar situation, with an institution that was not prepared to act in a responsible way. We’ve seen some impacts even with our invitation summons to Canada Soccer. For Google to come forward and explain itself to Canadians is something that this committee, I believe, should be looking at passing unanimously. This would show that same force of will that it has, as a committee of parliamentarians, to ensure that massive companies like Google are held to account for their actions.

I deplore its actions. I think Google has acted in a very irresponsible way. I support this motion as a way of allowing us to question it on behalf of Canadians for the actions it’s taken over the last few weeks.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Julian.

I don’t see any other hands up.

I’m sorry, Ms. Thomas. Go ahead.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I guess I’m just wanting to check in. I have an amendment that I would like to propose. I stand to be corrected, but I believe Mr. Champoux also put a couple of minor amendments on the table. Is that right?

• (1115)

The Chair: No, he didn’t. He just corrected the translation.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: There is no vote needed with regard to what Mr. Champoux is putting forward.

The Chair: No.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Okay. That’s great.

The dialogue I would wish to have with my colleagues is just around the language of the motion. Right now it reads that we would summon these individuals to come to committee. On the one hand, I understand the urgency. I think there’s a desire to have Google come for Monday.

Given that urgency, we’re kind of skipping steps one and two and just going right to three, which is to summon rather than invite, but I wonder if that is how we want to conduct ourselves as a committee. It feels rather forceful, whereas I think Google has internal motivation and even external motivation, based on its business in Canada, to show up. I wonder if there would be appetite around the table to amend the language, to simply say we would invite or request that Google come for Monday’s meeting.

The Chair: Are there any comments on Mrs. Thomas's comment?

Go ahead, Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I appreciate very much Rachael's comment. In general, that would be the approach we would all take—we would first invite—but because of the timing and the desire to have them here next Monday, I don't believe we would have the option of inviting and then, if they didn't come, holding a second meeting to summon them in time to have them here on Monday.

I also—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Housefather, would it be possible for you to lower your microphone a little?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I am sorry, Mr. Champoux.

I hope that's better now.

[*English*]

I don't think we would have time to summon them again, and that is why I believe it would be better to summon them at the beginning.

I also am concerned that we have specifically requested three people from Google, and if we simply “invited” them, I would not be surprised if Google sent only Canadian representatives and did not send people from head office, where I think the decisions are actually made.

I entirely respect the request made by my colleague, Mrs. Thomas. I just think that because of timing and the extraordinary nature of things, I would rather summon them to begin with, because I think otherwise we will not have them on Monday for sure. I want to make sure we have them on Monday, but I respect the request. In a normal context, I would have agreed with it.

The Chair: Thank you, Anthony.

Is Martin's hand up?

Martin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Yes, but Mr. Julian raised his hand before me.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Peter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Mr. Champoux.

I also think Ms. Thomas raised an important point. Given the deadline, however, I agree we have no other choice but to summon witnesses immediately, for the reasons Mr. Housefather just gave. It seems to me that it's the logical way to proceed, although what Ms. Thomas just said on the matter really resonates with me.

[*English*]

I want to raise one point. Mr. Bittle may want to speak to this, or he may want to accept this as a friendly amendment. We do not have on the list Sundar Pichai, who is the chief executive officer of Google. I am wondering if Mr. Bittle would accept that fourth name—since he is an important part of the Google team—as part of his motion.

The Chair: Go ahead, Chris.

Mr. Chris Bittle: I have no issues with accepting that as a friendly amendment.

The Chair: Although there is no such thing as a friendly amendment, I think we're going to have to take that as an amendment and know that it's going to pass.

Before we get there, we have Martin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

To start, I want to say that I agree with Mr. Julian's proposed amendment, which we can't describe as a favourable amendment, because that doesn't exist.

I also agree with Ms. Thomas's proposal, meaning that under normal circumstances, we certainly would have started by inviting Google's representatives. However, in the current context, given the apparent manoeuvring Google engaged in recently, time is short and we want answers quickly. It's rather worrisome. There are some very significant questions to ask, in my opinion.

We are seeing Google use tactics that look like the strawman their representatives brandished during study of the bill. They claimed, for instance, that by passing Bill C-18, the government would be supporting disinformation. They also argued that the government was giving itself the right to decide what Canadians could and could not see. That argument came up often during study of Bill C-11.

What Google is currently doing, meaning limiting certain content, is very frightening to me. I find it extremely worrisome. I want to quickly know the real reasons for this operation. It looks more like bullying to me than a business strategy. I also want to know the criteria used to select content Google planned to block or authorize. I find those questions extremely worrisome.

It's not like Google to act this way. I remind you that, even though the company was opposed to implementing this kind of legislation, it always said it would comply with regulations in place, as it does in all the countries around the world where it does business. I find it very worrisome to see Google act this way.

I think we have to summon Google's representatives as quickly as possible, so that they can explain their actions. For me, there's no doubt about it.

• (1120)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Martin.

Yes, go ahead, Rachael.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Chair.

I understand the argument around the table, so I won't push for a formal vote on that, but I would make another amendment or proposal, which is this—

The Chair: Excuse me. I'm sorry, Rachael.

We have Peter Julian's amendment for the addition of the head of Google, Sundar.... Would you like us to deal with that, and then we can deal with yours?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I apologize.

The Chair: That's okay.

Peter, can you repeat your amendment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to add Sundar Pichai, Google's Chief Executive Officer, to the list.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right. Shall I call the vote on the amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: We now have the amended motion.

Rachael, you wanted to add something.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Yes. Thank you, Chair.

The proposal I would put forward is.... One of the things that came out in the initial article—that was put forward with regard to the decision made by Google—was that in its response, it pointed to various components in the legislation in order to justify the decision it made.

I wonder if there would be an appetite to bring officials to committee as well. Basically, what this would allow us to do is.... Yes, questions are mostly going to be directed at Google, but it would also allow us to then direct questions to the officials in order to verify: "Google is claiming this. Is it true?"

You are able to do both at once. You're able to get Google's insights, its opinions, its decision-making process and its reasons, but then you are also able to verify what the legislation really does and whether or not Google is acting within the framework that it's claiming to.

My proposal would be that officials from the heritage department, who would be able to speak to the legalities of this legislation, also be present for the duration of this committee.

The Chair: Thank you for the clear amendment.

Is there any discussion?

Go ahead, Chris.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

This is about Google, what Google has done and the actions it has undertaken. It has to answer to legislators. It has to answer to Canadian democracy. Its attempts to avoid regulation, not only in Canada but around the world, are disappointing. I guess it's not sur-

prising for a large company like this to seek to avoid regulation, but this isn't the time to muddy the water with officials. This is the time for Google to answer to members of Parliament as to what it did, what it's planning to do and the actions it's taking.

Thank you.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you.

Peter Julian, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I, too, think that what Mrs. Thomas is proposing in her amendment is premature. We really need to question Google executives about the company's irresponsible actions. No one in Canada is in favour of censorship. Google's actions appear to be irresponsible, especially considering that the same strategy failed in Australia. It shows a lack of respect for Canadians, who will now be deprived of information they really need.

The point of this motion and this emergency meeting is to convene a meeting so the committee can question the people at Google. If, down the road, we decide to extend our study and to invite department officials, I'm fine with that. For the time being, however, I will not support the amendment because the purpose of today's meeting is to convene a special meeting to examine the Google situation. In the course of our discussions, we may decide to hold additional meetings on the matter, and I reserve the right to change my mind at that time.

[*English*]

The Chair: Rachael, your hand is up.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Chair.

Again, I understand the arguments that have been put on the table. The intent is not to distract from Google and what's going on there. The intent is simply to supplement.

I wonder, then, if the committee would perhaps entertain that we bring Google for the full two hours, followed by an hour with officials. I see great value in being able to follow up on the statements Google is making with an authoritative body that is able to speak to the credibility of Google's claims and whether or not certain components are in the legislation.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on this?

If not, I will call the question on Ms. Thomas's amendment to add Heritage Canada officials to the meeting we'd be having with Google.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

• (1130)

The Chair: Is there anyone opposed to the motion that Mr. Bittle originally put forward, as amended?

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

The Chair: I think we have another motion on the table.

It's Mr. Housefather next, I believe.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Chair, I had my hand up.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Kevin.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That's fine.

I have a question. What happens if, for Google, because most of these people are coming from the United States, they don't show up?

The Chair: My understanding is that if we summon them and they don't show up, they're in contempt of Parliament.

Clerk, will you correct me?

The Clerk: If I could clarify, for any individuals not residing in Canada or who are not present in Canada, the summons would have no force. The committee's powers and privileges are limited to the physical borders of Canada. If anybody is elsewhere on the planet, our summons has little to no effect.

If they are in Canada and they receive the summons and do not appear, the committee can report that matter to the House. Then it would be up to the House to decide if that is contempt. If it is contempt, someone would move an appropriate remedy: maybe call the person to the House or have the Sergeant-at-Arms send a bailiff to get them. If a person ignores a summons, it's completely up to the House to deal with it. The committee would have to report it first, and then the House would deal with it.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Chair, with the Google representatives coming—and I believe they are all from the United States—I think it would be wise for us to include a Canadian who works for Google. That way, we would have assurances that somebody from Google would be attending the meeting on Monday.

I ask for your thoughts on that.

The Chair: Chris, do you have any needs that you feel should be added?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Anthony has his hand up and will address the comment.

The Chair: Anthony, go ahead.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: There is a Canadian on the list. Sabrina is Canadian, and she's the country manager for Canada, so that is covered. There is a Canadian presence.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you for that clarification.

The Chair: Thank you, Anthony.

Go ahead, Martin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I was going to say the same thing, Madam Chair. One of the people on the list looks to have a French last name, Richard Gingras. I assume he works for Google in Canada. As far as Ms. Geremia is concerned, she does indeed work for Google in Canada.

I have a question about what Mr. Waugh asked. If we summon people who do not work in Canada or who are not in Canada at the

time of the summons and if those people do not respond to the summons to appear, would they have trouble getting into Canada afterwards?

Mr. Housefather is nodding yes, but the clerk is saying no. I'll let them sort it out.

[*English*]

The Chair: Anthony, go ahead.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I think I'll let Mike chime in.

If they come to Canada, the committee can then seek to enforce the summons. The committee maintains the power, when the person arrives on Canadian soil, to seek to enforce it. Whether or not they accept the invitation of the committee would certainly be something they would consider if they come to Canada frequently.

Again, as Mike said, we have no power to force them. I believe we had Mr. Zuckerberg when we did that the last time, and we had no power to force it, but if they ever do come to Canada, we can then actually attempt to enforce it. Certainly, given that we have a Canadian on the list, we know that she is required to come, and we'll see how the others comport themselves. Hopefully, they'll be co-operative—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I apologize for interrupting Mr. Housefather, but I have a point of order, Madam Chair. I'm not sure what the problem is, but the interpretation has stopped.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I'm done, Mr. Champoux.

Mr. Martin Champoux: I'm being told that the audio quality wasn't good enough.

It may be the position of your mike, Mr. Housefather.

● (1135)

[*English*]

The Chair: While we look after that with Anthony, I'll move on to Peter Julian, who has his hand up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, we may run into the same issue with the interpretation.

[*English*]

The Chair: No. The problem is with Mr. Housefather.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Very good.

[*English*]

I think it is really important as a committee.... It is true that we have to report this to the House, but this is something these executives have to respond to. If we start to say that we will allow Google to replace the decision-makers with locally based people, even though one of the people we are summoning is in Canada, we're sending the wrong message.

Google's actions have been irresponsible. Google's actions amount to censorship. Google's actions are disrespectful of Canadians. I think we should be prepared as a committee to report this to the House if we have Google executives who show even more disrespect by refusing the summons of a parliamentary committee. This is no small thing.

I think it's important that we proceed, as we should, with the intent to push Google to respect this parliamentary committee and ultimately the House of Commons, the Parliament of Canada and the Canadian people.

The Chair: Thank you, Peter.

Just before I go to Martin, I would like to clarify something with Mike, the clerk.

Can the House of Commons, if reported, summons people from outside of Canada? Does that hold, or do they not have the power?

The Clerk: We can attempt it. Basically, we'd be trying to find some sort of process server to deliver it to assure the committee that they had indeed received the summons, but the person could completely ignore it. There is no enforceable mechanism whereby Canada's Parliament can compel someone to appear at committee. They have to be within Canada. That's where the privileges and powers of the committee and Parliament extend.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Martin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

First off, the motion was adopted, and we are going to summon the people listed in the motion. I suggest that the committee wait to see how the people at Google respond. In all likelihood, we won't get to hear from everyone we summoned. It is even highly likely that we'll get only one of them—or two, if we're lucky. At that point, the committee would have to decide whether that was satisfactory. Once we meet with the witnesses from Google who do appear, the committee members will have to decide whether they have heard enough or whether the committee should again summon the head of Google in a more formal capacity.

As the clerk pointed out, we don't have the power to summon witnesses outside the country. We can give it a shot and hope for good faith and goodwill on Google's end. We should decide whether we are satisfied with the witnesses who appear after we send out our summons.

My sense is that Google will send someone, but I think it's unlikely that all four of the people in the motion will appear on Monday.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Anthony, did you finish what you had to say? Is your mike working now?

I would like to double-check: Is there interpretation?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Hopefully, yes, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Hopefully.

We will now move on.

Anthony, will you bring forward your motion, please?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I believe I had unanimous consent to ask for documents from Canada Soccer. The motion reads as follows:

That as part of the committee's Safe Sport study, the committee orders Canada Soccer to produce an unredacted copy of all contracts (including but not limited to the representation agreement) that it has with Canadian Soccer Business and that these be provided to the clerk of the committee by Friday at noon EST on March 3, 2023.

This is just so we can get this very important document before we have Canada Soccer come and speak with us.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1140)

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any discussion on Anthony's motion?

Yes, Peter.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thanks very much, Madam Chair.

I certainly support the motion. I wanted to potentially add to it and have the clerk perhaps confirm with me the earliest minutes from Canada Soccer that we have received as a committee.

The Clerk: I'll have to take a minute and check on that. I believe they go back to 2018, but I'll double-check.

The Chair: While you're doing that...

Have you finished, Peter? Kevin's hand is up.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm always interested in hearing from Kevin, for sure.

I'll come back on the list, Madam Chair, once we get the answer in terms of minutes.

The Chair: Good.

Go ahead, Kevin.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Chair, I'm worried about translation. It has been taking longer to get the translation of any documents that we've received, so I throw that out there in terms of asking for the documents in three days.

You can ask for them, but translation is going to be the issue. They are backed up, as we all know, so I wanted to raise that we might get the documents, but we won't get the translation in time. Thus, we have an issue.

The Chair: Clerk, do you have a comment on that?

The Clerk: I believe we've distributed the Canada Soccer minutes, going back as far as January 2018. That's as far back as they went.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Yes, Mike. You're right.

If I can interject here, what Anthony is asking for is the unredacted Canada Soccer and Canadian Soccer Business agreement that was signed by Nick Bontis, who, as of yesterday, is the former president of Canada Soccer.

I believe Mr. Housefather wanted to see the transaction or the agreement between Canada Soccer and Canadian Soccer Business, because that's where the issue is starting to fall, with our national teams claiming they're not getting enough money.

Mr. Housefather can correct me, but I think that's the issue.

We would like to see the agreements signed between the two parties. That's why I thought they might give us the agreements by Friday, but it could take them a while to translate it.

The Chair: Thank you, Kevin.

Peter, is your hand up, or is that a standing hand?

Mr. Peter Julian: It's not a standing hand, Madam Chair. I put them up and take them down each time.

Thanks to our clerk for confirming January 2018.

I would like to add to the motion that we seek the board minutes for 2017 for Canada Soccer. I know you don't allow friendly amendments, but I'm looking at Mr. Housefather. Hopefully, he is amenable to that.

As part of the issue of getting to the bottom of what's transpired with Canada Soccer, I think the minutes from 2017 would be valuable to us. Those minutes would have already been put into place. I don't see any difficulty at all in having Canada Soccer provide those by March 3 as well.

Mr. Waugh is right about the issue of translation. We have about a week—two weeks, ultimately—to get them translated and get them to committee. I think that should be ample time.

I'm hoping that Mr. Housefather is amenable to that amendment—if it can't be a friendly amendment, then as something we add in—which is the board minutes for 2017.

The Chair: All right.

Is that not redundant, Anthony, because you have already said "all contracts"? That goes as far back as we want it to go, doesn't it?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Peter is asking for board minutes, which is different, Madam Chair.

The Chair: You're asking for contracts. All right.

Everyone has heard Peter's amendment, which is the addition of board minutes for 2017.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: We now have an amended motion on the floor.

Is there any further discussion? No.

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

The Chair: What a great committee to have today. Wow. You guys are moving along nicely.

Given that, is there any further business that anyone wants to discuss with regard to these issues? No.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Chair, I'm not trying to be disagreeable, but I want to come back to the sound quality issue. It is pretty important, after all. We have interpreters, who do an extraordinary job and whose services we need so that each of us fully understands what's being said and can follow the proceedings. Of course, that's true for the people at the table, but it's also true for the other people in the room and those who are following the proceedings virtually.

The interpreters were having problems today because of Mr. Housefather's equipment and the audio quality. I know this is something he cares about deeply as well.

Taking the time to do sound checks when people participate virtually is important. It helps ensure that the meeting flows more smoothly, and it avoids interpreters having to flag a problem or stop interpreting partway because the participant's connection or sound quality is too poor. It would take just five minutes at the beginning of every meeting, but it would make a big difference. Not only is the quality of the interpretation at stake, but so too is the health and safety of the interpreters. What's more, the meeting would flow more smoothly if sound checks were conducted beforehand. We wouldn't have to stop the meeting every time an audio problem arose because a participant wasn't using the right equipment.

I wanted to bring that to your attention, Madam Chair, and to the clerk's. Conducting sound checks should be part of our routine, so that the interpreters can do their jobs.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you. That's a very effective and appropriate solution, Martin.

I see Rachael and Peter. I don't know whose hand went up first, because I was watching Martin as he spoke. It's fascinating to watch Martin as he speaks. Whose hand was up first—Rachael's or Peter's?

Mr. Peter Julian: It was Madam Thomas's.

The Chair: All right.

Go ahead, Rachael.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: That's awesome. Thank you so much. I'm just seeking a point of clarification: Is it the will of the committee, then, that we go ahead and hear from Canada Soccer, regardless of whether or not we have these documents translated, or are we going to wait for translation before hearing from Canada Soccer? I am concerned about the time that is potentially going to require.

The Chair: Could we have the mover of the motion speak to that?

Anthony, are we prepared to go ahead if we do not have the translated documents?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Chair, I believe we have already invited Canada Soccer, and the clerk has confirmed them. I was not intending to delay that, but I hope the contracts are the first things translated and that they can get to us relatively quickly.

The Chair: Thank you.

Peter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think two weeks should be enough for translation.

I agree with Mr. Champoux. We have Jabra headsets, which are very high-quality. The sound quality is good enough for the interpreters to do their jobs. I will say it again because it's important. We have Jabra headsets that we are supposed to be using. If anyone doesn't have one for some reason, the House administration can order them one.

It is vitally important that interpreters have a safe workplace. As committee members, we should agree not to participate in meetings if we don't have a Jabra headset or other House administration-approved headset. The same goes for witnesses. We have to be adamant about that. This is a hybrid Parliament, and if it's going to work, we have to use the appropriate headsets to keep interpreters safe.

I wanted to echo what Mr. Champoux said, because I completely agree with him. We need to prioritize the health and safety of interpreters in the workplace.

• (1150)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Peter.

Martin spoke to the issue of using the appropriate headset for the safety of interpreters, but he wanted to continue to let the meeting be fluid. I think he was suggesting that at the beginning of the meeting we take the five minutes necessary to have a sound check with everyone. I think he was also asking for that, which I think is quite wise.

Kevin, go ahead.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to Martin and Peter for bringing that up.

I just have a clarification.

I think in the motion, Anthony, you said “current” president of Canada Soccer. Well, yesterday Mr. Bontis resigned. They don't have a current president. Is it possible that we just name the person that we want to come?

I might be off a bit, but I think you said “current” president of Canada Soccer. They don't have one as of yesterday, and they may not have one for several months, so I'm a little concerned about the wording of it.

The Chair: Anthony, would you like to respond? If we're speaking to the motion you just brought in, it doesn't say anything about the current president, does it?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: This is an excellent point. This was Peter's motion from last meeting. I think he might want to correct that to name Mr. Bontis now, given Kevin's excellent point.

The Chair: Go ahead, Peter.

Mr. Peter Julian: If Mr. Housefather wanted to move that, I think that would be a clarification of the motion we adopted.

The Chair: Would you like to move that, Anthony?

Go ahead and move it. Say it in words, so that we have it clear.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I move that the committee invite, and if he does not accept, summon, Nick Bontis to appear before it.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

The Chair: Does that answer your question, Kevin?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Yes, it does. We could have been caught on a technicality here.

Thank you, Mr. Julian, for giving it to Mr. Housefather, even though I brought it up. I probably should have been the one who moved the motion, but it doesn't matter. It's done.

That's where this look into Canada Soccer has to start, with Mr. Bontis as past president, so well done.

The Chair: Thank you.

Peter, is your hand up again, or is it still up?

Mr. Peter Julian: It's a new “up”. I just wanted to give full credit to Mr. Waugh for having identified that weakness. I think we consider Mr. Waugh the inspiration for the motion we've just adopted.

The Chair: Thank you.

Seeing that there is no further business, I want to congratulate the committee on being so co-operative and congenial. It's really nice. Thank you.

With that, I declare the meeting adjourned. We'll see you guys on Monday.

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