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—
Chair

Ms. Marlene Catterall

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• (1540)

[Translation]

The Clerk of the Committee: Welcome to you all.

[English]

Good afternoon, everyone.

Members of the committee, I see a quorum. We can now proceed with the election of the chair.

Are there any nominations?

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Clerk, I'm very honoured to be a newly appointed MP to this committee, and it is my distinct pleasure to nominate Marlene Catterall as our new chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Simms that Ms. Catterall be elected chair of this committee. Is it agreed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare Marlene Catterall duly elected chair of this committee.

We will now proceed with the election of vice-chairs. As you all know, the special order adopted by the House on Tuesday, October 5, provides that the chair of each standing committee shall be a member of the governing party. We have done that. The first vice-chair shall be a member of the official opposition and the second vice-chair shall be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): I nominate Gary as the first vice-chair from the official opposition.

The Clerk: It is moved by Mr. Obhrai that Mr. Gary Schellenberger be elected vice-chair for the opposition. Is it agreed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare Mr. Schellenberger elected vice-chair.

Now for the election of a vice-chair for another opposition party.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): I would like to nominate Mr. Maka Kotto as vice-chair.

The Clerk: Mr. Marc Lemay moves that Mr. Maka Kotto be elected as vice-chair of this committee. Agreed?

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Clerk: I will now invite Madame Catterall to take the chair.

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): First I should like to thank members of the committee for having elected me Chair of this committee.

[English]

I understand the tradition of this committee is to work by consensus. I find that to be the most productive way for parliamentary committees to work, so I certainly hope that tradition will continue. I feel that this committee, more than any other, represents what the identity of this country is about, and the work we do here is very important for the future, not only of our nation but for the expression of the reality of our many different regions and people. So I really look forward to working with all of you in the coming months.

And congratulations to the two vice-chairs of the committee as well.

We have a number of routine motions to do here. The clerk has given me a notice here that I know nothing about. These are analysts from the Library of Parliament. I need to check this very carefully because I'm a great supporter of committees using researchers from the Library of Parliament who can help build up the corporate memory of what our committees have done.

We have a motion that the committee retain the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament, as needed, to assist the committee in its work, at the discretion of the chair. I understand we have someone who has traditionally been the researcher with the committee but who cannot be here today, and a second one as well.

Do we have a mover for the motion?

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): I so move.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Sam Banks is one of our researchers. She has a master's degree in law and has been with the committee since 2002. Normally she would sit at the table with us, so I invite her to join us. Our second analyst is not available today.

We'll proceed with the next item, a motion to establish a subcommittee on agenda and procedure. I understand that this committee traditionally has not had a so-called steering committee. With the smaller number of members on the committee, we might want to continue with the committee establishing its own agenda rather than having a steering committee.

Is there a consensus around that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay. So we won't bother with that motion. We'll see how that works.

The next motion is to receive and publish evidence in the absence of a quorum. Do I have a mover for that? Yes, from Mr. Obhrai.

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

The Chair: Next is the allocation of time for questions. This tends to be the most controversial discussion at any committee meeting.

Mr. Clerk, is what's before us now what we were doing in the past?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): No, it's not.

The Chair: It's not what I understood we were doing in the past.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: If I may, Madam Chair, I'm not opposed to it, but this is not what we have done in the past. In the past, and I understand that there were different dynamics in the government, the official opposition had five minutes, the Bloc had five minutes, and it came back five and five. Then it was the NDP and the Conservatives, five. So it was always five and five, and it would go back and forth. So it wasn't seven and five.

Again, I'm just saying how it was. It's up to the committee to decide. It worked effectively, because that way all members had an opportunity to say something.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Chair, first let me congratulate you on being our chair.

I do understand what my colleague on the other side is saying, but as she very rightly pointed out, the dynamics have changed, and we need to address the dynamics that have changed. I think what we would like to propose is that the first round be seven minutes, starting with us, then the BQ, then the NDP, and then the Liberals.

The second round, at five minutes, would be us, the BQ, and the Liberals.

If you go to a third round, it would be again five minutes, with us, the Liberals, and the NDP.

This way, we are reflecting the governing side being there all the time, and us. What we do is we get four for the government, four for the opposition, two for the Bloc, and one for the NDP, and possibly, if time permits, two for the NDP. I think this reflects a far more balanced approach. You have your four questions and we have our four questions.

The Chair: You lost me on your mathematics, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Excellent.

The Chair: Four for the official opposition, four for the government, and...

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: The way we start is that the first round is seven minutes, with each one having seven minutes. The first round will be the official opposition, the Bloc, and the NDP, and then the Liberals. It's the same; the only thing different from what you were suggesting is that we're now putting the NDP ahead of you. Otherwise, it went back to you as well.

In the second round of five minutes, it's the official opposition, the Bloc, and you. So we are going back and forth. The third round is us and you.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: That way you have five to our two.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No, no, it's four to four. How did you get two?

The Chair: As I understand it, it's four for the official opposition, four for the government...

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Two for the Bloc.

The Chair: Yes, and four divided between the other two parties—three and one, in other words.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: That's right. That's what I think we should propose.

The Chair: My only thing is that, looking at the membership of the committee, it might be fairer to do two for the Bloc and one for the NDP.

• (1550)

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: That's what it is, really.

The Chair: As I said, I'm trying to sort out the mathematics here.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Well, unless there is...

The Chair: After the first round.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes, unless there is more than that. Then you could do that.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I'm sorry, I don't understand about the first round. You'd go one, two, three, four?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Right, and the second round, one, two, three. The second round would be five minutes.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: So you would all question, the four, and we would only have two questions in those two rounds, then.

The Chair: No, that would be five, and we'd have two.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: But where is the four and four? I'm sorry, I don't understand the four and four.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: If it goes four rounds.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: If all of us go for a round, then it will be four and four. I don't know how many rounds we'll go.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: If it only goes three rounds, it would be three, three, two, and one.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: You'll always match up with us. You're not going to be shortchanged.

All right, let's try it all over again.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I just think, realistically, when we have people come before us, many times it's more than ten minutes, and we don't have that much time. The reality is that very rarely does only one person come, especially in the last...

One of the things we could still be seized with, if the committee wants to do it, is copyright reform. At that time, we'll have four or five people coming. Just the mathematics won't allow us that questioning.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: True, but in round one everybody gets their first chance at seven minutes, everybody.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I think it's too long.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Why? Everybody gets a chance.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Depending on the number of witnesses, we may not have that much time. That's the problem.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Seven minutes, first round—everybody.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I don't care about the seven minutes, it's just that...

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Do you want to put five minutes? I don't care.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Through you, Madam Chair, I just think reality means five minutes if we have a lot of witnesses. It's just a reality of this committee that we have usually four or five people. If we can cut—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Fine, so let's go five minutes instead of seven.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Okay. Just five all around.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Everybody gets one question in the first round, five minutes, and then the second round, it's the official opposition, the Liberals, and the Bloc, five minutes. Time permitting, the NDP would be back in the third round. That is what the other committees have agreed to.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I can agree with the five minutes. I know in the previous session at various times I didn't have a question that would have taken five minutes. So I could agree to five minutes in the first round—the official opposition, the Bloc, NDP, and Liberal in the first round; official opposition, Bloc, Liberal in the second round; official opposition, Liberal, NDP in the third round; and then if there is a fourth round, the official opposition and Liberal.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: You go to the fourth round if you have the time.

The Chair: It would be rare to get to a fourth round, I would think.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Of course.

The Chair: So you have to look at what's fair in the first three rounds, essentially.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: If you look at the first three, it's three, three, two, two, and one, or possibly two.

The Chair: Is our clerk following this?

The Clerk: Well, I'm trying.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but from what I have, the first round would be five minutes for the official opposition, for the Bloc, for the NDP, and for the Liberals. The second round would be five minutes for the PC, five minutes for the Bloc, and five minutes for the Liberals. The third round, if time permits and probably it will, would have five minutes for the PC, five minutes for the Liberals, and five minutes for the NDP.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Correct.

The Clerk: And the fourth round, if time permits, would be the same formula.

The Chair: So in three rounds, the official opposition gets three cracks.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Three rounds, three cracks. The NDP gets two cracks and the Bloc gets two cracks.

• (1555)

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: It's only if we go to the third round that the NDP gets a second crack.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: If we talk on the third round.

The Chair: Are we willing to try that, or does somebody have an option?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Madam Chair, let's try it. If it isn't workable, based on the history of this committee, we could revisit it.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Sounds good to me.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: We can do that temporarily and see how it goes.

The Chair: So the motion is that witnesses be given up to 10 minutes for their opening statement, and that at the discretion of the chair, during the questioning of the witnesses—and then it would be amended to reflect what we've just discussed.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Which is five minutes.

The Chair: It would be five minutes, yes.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: The next motion is that except for amendments to bills, 48 hours' notice be given before any substantive motion is considered by the committee, and that the motion be filed with the clerk of the committee and circulated to members in both official languages. We shouldn't have to say that. That should be accepted as normal practice. Upon receipt of the notice, the clerk shall put the motion on the agenda of the committee's next meeting. I presume that's provided it's 48 hours hence.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next item is order in council appointments.

Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I should like to move an amendment to this motion.

The Chair: With regard to nominations?

Mr. Marc Lemay: No, with regard to the tabling of documents.

To the motion: “That the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute to the members of the committee documents received only when they exist in both official languages”, we would like to add the following: “and that no document from a witness be distributed without the authorization of the clerk”.

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Chairman, can we get a rationale for that?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Could you say why?

[Translation]

The Chair: First, I should like to assure you that whenever I chair this committee, no document will be distributed if it does not exist in both official languages.

Mr. Marc Lemay: I am sorry, Madam Chair but it is a little too early for me to move my amendment. The motion that I wish to amend appears on the second page and it deals with distribution of documents.

The Chair: We are now dealing with a motion on order in council appointments.

[English]

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next item is in camera meetings.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: A situation arose where we had an in camera meeting and the names of the in camera witnesses were posted on a website. Can we ensure that doesn't happen? I say that more for the record than anything else. We were doing a study on the publishing industry, and when it came to the website, the names of the witnesses who were appearing were not in camera. If it's in camera, it should be in camera completely.

The Chair: I would like to make a comment as chair of the committee. I am not a great proponent of in camera meetings. I think that when we decide to have an in camera meeting, it should be for a reason and that reason should be stated. This may not be the way the committee has done things in the past. But I think as part of parliamentary reform, the more we can do in public, the better. So I would hope that we would not automatically go in camera for certain things but that we would have a reason for doing so.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next item is the distribution of documents.

Mr. Lemay.

• (1600)

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I was very vigilant, Madam Chair, even too much. We are satisfied with the present text: “that the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute to the members of the committee documents only when they exist in both official languages.” However, I should like to add the following: “and that no document from a witness be distributed without the authorization of the clerk.”

The Chair: That would apply to the distribution of documents during the committee sittings.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Or before. This is meant to avoid that a witness, unfortunately forgets the document of his presentation somewhere on a table before appearing in front of the committee to make his presentation.

The Chair: In my opinion, it is impossible to prevent someone from distributing a document to members of the committee or to other members, except in the case of committee meetings.

[English]

In any case, are there any objections to that?

[Translation]

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): I should like to insist on that point because during the 37th Parliament, there were cases when we got around that motion. It is for the purpose of avoiding a recurrence of that situation that we have moved this amendment, because it is a source of tension.

[English]

The Chair: Discussion?

Madam Bulte.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Again, Madam Chair, I know that in this committee we were very vigilant. Nothing was ever distributed without it being in another language, and it has always been the way of this committee because it is the heritage committee and we've been very conscious of it.

But with respect to Mr. Lemay's amendment, I have two problems with it. I think it should not be at the clerk's discretion. I think if anything it should be at the chair's discretion, if we want to go to that amendment. However, from a copyright point of view, for example, if an article that appears in the paper is in French, the copyright belongs to the French; it doesn't belong also to the English. So to translate it may be a violation of copyright. I just think we have to be concerned about that from a copyright point of view.

But again, Mr. Kotto, Mr. Lemay, and Mr. Schellenberger, I can assure you that nothing ever went out unless it was in both official languages.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: The intent of this motion, if I understand you correctly, is that your concern is that nothing be distributed by somebody else because it has not been translated and it is not available in two languages? Is that the intent of the motion?

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: No, not necessarily. It is more than that. First, it is quite obvious that a document must exist in both official languages. It's quite normal. However, we want to avoid the situation when someone distributes his or her document before appearing in front of the committee to make his or her presentation, as has happened elsewhere during the 37th Parliament. I'm not saying that this has happened in this committee. We are not suggesting that. We want this committee to be sovereign. I have absolutely no objection to having the word “clerk” replaced by “Madam Chair”. In my opinion, the chair is the boss of the committee.

As for the rest, in our opinion, documents must exist in both official languages. Should there be a copyright, we will make sure that it is respected. As a lawyer, I know full well that you can work with a document while respecting copyright. On the other hand, we would not want a witness, before his or her appearance, misplace his presentation document inadvertently—and here I am choosing my words very carefully—elsewhere other than in this room.

• (1605)

The Chair: It seems that the principle underlying your amendment is acceptable to the committee. However, under exceptional circumstances, the committee could decide to make an exception to the rule from time to time.

[*English*]

Is everybody in agreement with the amendment?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I want to ask a question. These are public documents anyway at the time they're handed in. So do we really need to put it in a motion? I think we can have the intent of what the member has said. I don't know the legal ramifications of putting it in a motion.

The Chair: Mr. Angus, and then back to Mr. Lemay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): I don't know if it covers the intent if someone is distributing documents before the committee begins to speak. Maybe that's not supposed to happen, but if it does happen, then it's in the rules that the chair can rule that that is out of order.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Madam Chair, for members of the committee, that is exactly what has been done in the past. The chair has stopped distribution of documents and has required the documents to be given back until they were fully translated. The clerk takes them. When they are fully translated, they are distributed. But no distribution takes place unless they're in both languages, and if somebody has tried to do that, they have been cautioned at the committee to take the documents back and to give them to the clerk.

The Chair: May I suggest that if that's the usual practice of the committee, there's no harm in having it in a motion.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: It's fine with me.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I have no problem with it. I thought it was a clear and simple motion, or a simple statement has been made there and we will adhere to it. The bigger you make the explanation the easier it is to fight around it. I think it's very clear the way it is.

The Chair: Do we need a vote on the amendment?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I think we should come to a consensus here.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I think it's good the way it is.

The Chair: Is there a consensus to adopt the amendment?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I think it's fine the way it is. I was just asking my Bloc colleague if that's okay with him.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I thought I had been very clear. It is obvious that we want the documents to be translated in both official languages. But what we want to avoid is for a witness to present his evidence outside of this room before appearing in front of the committee either by losing, forgetting or passing on his document to somebody else.

I need not give you examples, this seems to make a lot of sense to me. I'm not talking about this committee but it has happened several times last year. We want this Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage not be faced with a *fait accompli*.

[*English*]

The Chair: The clerk has suggested wording to me that might be less complex and that accomplishes the same thing.

[*Translation*]

In English, the motion would read: "That only the Clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute received documents to the members of the committee, and that such documents be only distributed when they exist in both official languages."

[*English*]

In other words, in English it would say that only the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents to the members of the committee and that such documents be distributed only when they are in both official languages. Is that acceptable?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maka Kotto: Yes, it is acceptable. The idea here is not to anticipate on something that has never happened. It is simply to take preventive action against what might happen. It is with a view to avoiding wilful blindness that we decided to take the lead.

• (1610)

The Chair: I understand.

Mr. Maka Kotto: By passing this motion, we only strengthen protection. As you have just said regarding the clerk's suggestion, this does not delineate the space where the clerk distributes these documents. Is it outside of this room? No. The clerk takes action essentially within this room. Let us just say that we remain fragile in this respect. I shall mention again the remark made earlier to the effect that because of copyright, we could, in such a case, have some difficulty getting a document translated. We shall live with this.

However, with regard to the possibility of getting around the motion, we must have maximum protection. This takes away nothing, it simply strengthens the case.

[*English*]

The Chair: With the modified wording I have proposed, it says that only the clerk is allowed to distribute documents and the clerk will only distribute documents in both official languages. Is that...

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maka Kotto: In this case, documents which would be distributed by witnesses personally, without being tabled with the clerk, will be considered null and void.

[*English*]

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: You can't do that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maka Kotto: This might happen. Besides, it has already happened in other committees, Madam Chair, during the 37th Parliament.

[English]

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Mr. Kotto, if I may, it has never happened in this committee at all. This is a committee—

[Translation]

Mr. Maka Kotto: Let say Madam Chair that I am Saint Thomas.

[English]

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: —of Canadian heritage. The committee is bound by the rules of the committee. There's nothing preventing a person who comes to see you in your office alone from giving you a document in only French or English. We can't control everything. What we can control is what the committee does, and that's what this is about.

I agree fully with what you are trying to do, but I think we are trying to over-complicate it. To prevent anybody from giving you a document... that won't happen. People will give you documents.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Chair, we have agreed to an amendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Maka Kotto: I do not want to get involved in a linguistic battle, this is not the place. French is my third language, English is my fifth language. But I have no problem with that. I could have asked for documents to be in Douala, which is my native tongue but I represent a very small minority. In short, on the basis of the clerk's proposal, let us add the following: that any document for consideration by the committee be translated in both official languages and that any document which is not, beside copyright, be considered null and void. I would be perfectly happy with this solution.

The Chair: I think that this is exactly what is achieved with my amendment. The clerk is the only person authorized to distribute documents and cannot do it unless they exist in both official languages.

Mr. Maka Kotto: Therefore the clerk, and only the clerk?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Maka Kotto: This is reassuring. All right.

The Chair: Are you agreeable?

(Amendment carried)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

[English]

The Chair: Working meals. I'll make sure they're healthy meals.

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

The Chair: Just so everybody knows, the scheduled times for the heritage committee to meet are Monday and Wednesday at 3:30 p.m.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Chair, you realize that the four guys from the west have to make sure we are here on Mondays.

The Chair: But you get to leave earlier at the end of the week. It's especially important that we use all available meeting times now that we have two extra committees, which you guys wanted.

Can I just ask for some guidance on what I would like to propose should be perhaps the first session of the committee. We will have a

piece of legislation, the bill amending the parks act, but that will probably not be dealt with until next week in the House, so we couldn't deal with it until the following week. What I would like to propose is that one of our first meetings should be to arrange to have the minister before us as soon as possible to get her perception on what the department is dealing with, the issues she expects to deal with in the coming months and year. That may take some time.

Perhaps the first meeting should be a briefing by our researchers and clerk on the work the committee has been doing. I don't know if briefing books have yet been prepared for the committee.

A voice: Yes.

The Chair: Yes, and they have been distributed. So may I suggest that we might want our researchers to take us through those briefing books so that we're all up to speed on what has been done.

● (1615)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Before you start, Madam Chair, perhaps you can tell us which members of this committee are parliamentary secretaries or, as I say, the persons who crack the whip.

The Chair: Madam Bulte is a parliamentary secretary.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Back again by popular demand.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Is she the only one?

The Chair: And which one is your critic who cracks your whip?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: We don't have one.

Did you say parks, Madam Chair?

The Chair: Yes, there is a bill in front of the House now.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Didn't parks move to Environment?

The Chair: Well, he told me it was coming to this committee.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: To this committee, despite the fact that parks has moved to the Department of the Environment. We're going to tackle that?

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Sam Banks (Committee Researcher): The reason the legislation is coming to this committee is so that the Heritage Act can be amended to remove all the remit for parks and put it to Environment.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: So it's a housekeeping project?

Mrs. Sam Banks: Yes.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Okay.

The Chair: Shall we meet again on Wednesday afternoon?

Madam Bulte.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: If I just may suggest this, before the minister comes, I think it would be really helpful for the committee as a whole to get an overview of the different departments and crown agencies, because when the minister comes the questioning goes to the minister. I think it would be very important for the committee as a whole to be briefed on the Department of Canadian Heritage so that we're in a better position to ask questions of the minister, so that, again, this committee can be a good working committee and understand the different agencies, for example, CBC, CRTC—you know, what is involved in this huge department.

That's a suggestion to the committee. Maybe that's not what you want, but I just think it's more useful to do that before the minister comes.

The Chair: Mr. Angus, and then Mr. Schellenberger.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I think it's an excellent idea that we get an overview before the minister comes. However, I'd like to suggest that before the minister comes we set our priorities as a committee for what we want to tackle, so we can make the most use of the minister's visit here as opposed to just hearing what she's up to, because afterwards we're not going to be able to ask her what we think is important.

So I'd prefer to have the briefing of what Heritage does, and I think we should then set our agenda for this coming session and then have the minister come in. Then we'll be well prepared.

The Chair: Can I throw something else into the mix, something that many committees pay virtually no attention to. The plans and priorities reports for all departments have just been tabled in Parliament, and I would think that's a very important context for the committee too, to see where the department thinks it's heading. Perhaps we might even want our analysts to prepare some work on that before we get a departmental briefing.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I think you first need to know what the department is made of before you can figure out what their plans are and where they're going. I know there are many new members who are on this committee for the first time. I agree with you about doing the plans and priorities, but we can't tell which is priority unless we have a whole overview. I think the more knowledge we have, the better.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I can only echo those sentiments. I came in partway through a session—I came in for the last year—and I just bounced around like you wouldn't believe. I just think it would be so nice to start at the bottom and understand what the committee is all about. I would enjoy that very much in order to enlighten myself, even after the short time I've been here.

But I agree with that; I think that's great. That way we can...

• (1620)

Mr. Wajid Khan: Have an understanding.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Yes, and I think it's so important. We can all work better together then, and I appreciate that idea.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I only rarely agree with the PS.

The Chair: All right. May I suggest that at our Wednesday meeting we get a briefing from our own staff about what work the committee has done in the previous Parliament, what's outstanding—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Or staff of the department.

The Chair: —and second, that we bring the department in.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Sarmite, you said the department, right?

The Chair: First the department? Okay, and that may in fact take more than one meeting. It may not be possible to arrange that by Wednesday, because that's perhaps a little short notice for a full-scale briefing. I will try, for sure.

Mr. Wajid Khan: We can ask the research staff if there's time enough for them.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I think the department has briefings all the time, so I think we should give it—

The Chair: We'll leave it to the parliamentary secretary to make sure it happens, shall we?

Thank you very much.

Is there any other business before the committee?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I would ask the clerk if I could obtain documents in English and in French, because I've only received the French version of them.

Le greffier: Of course.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Secondly, Madam Chair, Monday October 25th, the President of Mexico will be visiting Canada. Is the committee going to sit that particular Monday?

The Chair: No, not that Monday.

Mr. Marc Lemay: I believe that we should honour that visitor.

The Chair: So next week we shall sit Wednesday only.

Mr. Marc Lemay: I know that committee meetings start at 3:30 in the afternoon but at what time does the committee adjourn generally?

Le greffier: The meetings last two hours.

The Chair: Thank you very much and see you again.

[*English*]

Thank you.

This meeting is adjourned.

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