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—
Chair

The Honourable Andrew Telegdi

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.)): I call the committee to order.

We have some business to conduct, and I take it you all have your agendas. We need to get our committee moving and staffed, and all those good things, and make sure we have coffee and lunch when we require it.

I'll move to the subject of services of an analyst from the Library of Parliament. It is moved by Mr. Mark and seconded by Ms. Fry. He's going to be doing a lot of the work for us. As soon as we pass this motion he'll come up and sit beside us. He's going to introduce himself, as everybody else has done.

Any discussion?

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

The Chair: Next is the motion to establish a subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

This again is fairly routine, but different committees operate in different fashions. In the last Parliament we handled this as a committee of the whole, and we didn't have a subcommittee. This time around we have fewer members than we had before. We used to have 16, and now we're down to 12 members. I wonder if it would be useful to just go into committee of the whole to deal with this issue. Otherwise, we'll need to have a subcommittee that meets, and then we come back and rehash the same thing as we did in the subcommittee.

Mr. Mark.

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Chairman, I propose we meet in the committee of the whole to do planning. There's no point in having an extra meeting when we really don't need it, plus it will make it more open, and everyone will have more access to input in the determination of the committee.

The Chair: Great. We don't have to move this because that's what will happen if we don't move this motion.

Next is a motion to receive and publish evidence in the absence of a quorum. That basically happens when the committee is receiving evidence. It makes sure that when we have witnesses here, the evidence is heard and entered on the record, which of course every member gets to see afterwards. It also means we will have a member of the opposition present. It's open to every member of the committee, but we want to make sure that in those cases when we

don't have quorum, the witnesses we bring in at the expense of the committee get to enter their testimony.

It is moved by Mr. Temelkovski and seconded by Madame Faille.

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

The Chair: On witness expenses, again it's a fairly routine procedure for reimbursing witnesses who travel here from across Canada to give their expert advice.

It is moved by Mr. Siksay and seconded by Madame Fry.

Lui.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.): Is there any remuneration for them, other than for their expenses?

And we can decide on that at a later date?

• (1540)

It can pay for that. Okay.

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

The Chair: On distribution of documents with translation, it is moved by Madam Guergis and seconded by Monsieur Clavet.

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

The Chair: Next is working meals, to make sure the members get to eat so we don't eat each other.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): As long as it's not pizza.

The Chair: That's right. I would like to establish a precedent for having healthy food on the Hill.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Yes, exactly.

The Chair: Is that duly noted, Mr. Clerk?

It is moved by Madam Grewal and seconded by Dr. Fry.

You notice I use "Doctor" because we want to have healthy food.

Hon. Hedy Fry: You expect me to do something about the food. Seeing me eating Glosette peanuts covered in chocolate—I'm really the person to talk.

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

The Chair: Next is in camera meeting transcripts. There are two motions: one copy of the transcript—

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Andrew, can you go a little bit slower? The translation comes later, and when you're asking us questions we don't have time to react.

On the question before, the distribution of the documents, I wanted to intervene.

The Chair: With the indulgence of the committee we can go back.

Go ahead.

Ms. Meili Faille: I would like to have a decision. When the documents are given to the clerk they're in both languages. But if a witness comes with a document and has not done that prior to the meeting, is there provision that it can be...so we can have the time to analyze the information as well as everyone else?

The Chair: The process we have followed is that if a witness comes and the document is in only one of the official languages, they cannot distribute the document around the table; they have to read it into the record. The clerk will only distribute documents that are in both official languages. We were quite strict on that in the last committee as well. So the whole bilingual nature of Parliament—

Ms. Meili Faille: We're making efforts to speak in both languages, but to understand it, we want to have the information in French, please.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Meili Faille: Thank you.

The Chair: [*Technical difficulty*]...then the clerk will do the translation. But in cases where they show up with no translation, the documents are not distributed, so that everybody's on the same playing field by having to listen to the presenters.

Ms. Meili Faille: Until everyone gets the translation.

The Chair: That is correct.

Mr. Inky Mark: Mr. Chair, maybe I can make a comment on that.

In my seven years on committees, it was at the insistence of the Bloc that it be in both languages. In some committees I served on, it was the prerogative of the committee whether the untranslated document would be circulated with the consent of the committee.

I'm not sure whether you can do that or not, or if it has to be in both languages.

The Chair: The motion we have adopted is that we will only receive it officially in both official languages.

Madam Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Would that preclude the idea that if someone comes from a small non-governmental organization, they have it in only one language, and they put it on a table back there, that we can pick it up? Would that be against this motion?

The Chair: You can do that outside of the committee room, not inside the committee room.

• (1545)

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: We should have it in both languages as soon as it's available, after it's been handed out for distribution.

The Chair: We'll call upon our clerk.

The Clerk of the Committee: When a witness is invited by the committee to appear, if we give two weeks' notice I contact the witness and tell them we'll supply the translation services if they can get it in within seven working days before their appearance. That's

how long it takes to do the documentation. If they can't make that, I see if they can bring their translation with them at the last minute. If not, then I just take it in whatever language, and it isn't distributed to any of the members.

If they read it into the record, you will get the interpretation and it will be in the transcript, so I probably won't get it translated after the fact. But if they don't read it verbatim, we will send it out for translation and members will get copies.

The Chair: Madam Guergis.

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): A point was made at the status of women committee that the translators are behind schedule and it's taking longer than they anticipated, so some documents may not be translated in time for a committee. I just wanted to point that out.

The Chair: It's like that all the time, so we'll have to pass a motion asking them to try to make sure—

The Clerk: The protocol is supposed to be within seven working days.

The Chair: —the protocol is followed.

Okay, in camera meetings transcripts: I need a mover that one copy of the transcripts of all in camera meetings be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee.

Mr. Inky Mark: So moved.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is that unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to have one staff person present at in camera meetings. Can I get a mover on that? Mr. Clavet. That's so one of your staff members can come along with you.

It is seconded by Madam Guergis.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is a substantive motion: 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. Upon receipt of the notice, the clerk shall put the motion on the agenda of the committee's next meeting.

It is moved by Madam Grewal and seconded by Madam Ablonczy.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next, designate a chair: that when the chair is unable to act in that capacity at or during a meeting of the committee, the chair shall designate a member of the committee to act as chair at or during the said meeting, and such an acting chair shall be vested with all the powers of the chair at or during the said meeting.

Can I get a mover? Mr. Temelkovski. Can I get a seconder on that? Madam Fry.

Mr. Mark.

•(1550)

Mr. Inky Mark: It states in the motion that the chair should designate a member of the committee. I suggest we amend that to say one of the vice-chairs of the committee. There's no point in having vice-chairs if they're not going to be useful, unless they're absent.

The Chair: I hear your comments, Mr. Mark. That was going to be my procedure. But in cases where we don't have a vice-chair present, particularly when we have to hear witnesses—

Mr. Inky Mark: Put that in the motion.

The Chair: Okay. You made an amendment. Can we have a seconder for the amendment?

Madam Faille.

Is there any further discussion? The amendment says that in the absence of the chair it falls to one of the vice-chairs to chair the meeting. In the absence of the vice-chairs we have to designate another member of the committee, particularly when it comes to hearing witnesses.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: On order in council appointments, whenever an order in council appointment is referred to the committee, the clerk shall obtain and circulate to each member of the committee a copy of the said appointment, the committee shall be informed, and the clerk shall obtain and circulate to each member of the committee a copy of the said appointment with the appointee's curriculum vitae.

It is moved by Mr. Siksay.

Monsieur Clavet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet (Louis-Hébert, BQ): I'm curious as to whether, in the case of an order in council appointment, we can also ask that the curriculum vitae be submitted in both official languages.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's understood. We will not take any other documents.

Madam Ablonczy.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): I'm concerned about getting this information at the committee, and then it being very difficult to do any background work to make sure we make a good investigation of whether it is the best appointment. Would it be in order for us to specify that this information be circulated 48 hours in advance, let's say?

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Brampton West, Lib.): In other committees it usually is. As they come through, they're usually sent to us. I think even if they're given to us at the time of the meeting, we don't have to approve them until we bring forward a motion to approve them or to look at them. I don't think, if they present them to you at a meeting, you necessarily have to deal with them at that meeting if you've just received them. I think when it's dealt with is at the discretion of the committee.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Yes, but is there some problem with getting them ahead of time?

•(1555)

The Chair: No. The clerk tells me that as soon as a member wants to receive information on them they will be circulated. He sends them out as soon as he receives them.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Colleen is saying that you don't necessarily discuss each and every one at the committee.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: Not only that, usually when they're received by the clerk he fires them off to your office anyway for your perusal. Then you can deal with them or not at committee. At least that's the way most committees work.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: So you're saying that whenever we get the material, it will still be open to the committee to visit the appointment, so to speak.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: Yes.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Are there any appointments that we're supposed to approve before they become final under this new regime?

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: No. I think you just have the option of questioning—

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: So do we get to bitch after the fact if we want to? I could put that in more parliamentary language if you wish.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: No, I like that better.

The Chair: Mr. Mark.

Mr. Inky Mark: I would like to make an amendment basically stating that the committee has the option of calling these order in council appointments before the committee by consent of the committee.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: We already did that.

Mr. Inky Mark: It doesn't say that in this motion, so I'm just debating the motion.

The Chair: I guess we could make it more explicit, but the clerk informs me that is exactly what the committee does.

I'll pass it over to the clerk, with the indulgence of the committee.

Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: As soon as I get an order in council that's tabled in the House, I send it off to all the members' offices so the members have a chance to look at it. They can put down, under the 48-hour notice motion thing, that they'd like to hear from this order in council appointment. Then I get the c.v. and circulate it to the members. The members agree to hear this individual and invite the individual in. That's the process.

The committee decides who they want to hear if they want to take up an order in council appointment. But the documentation will be there. I think 12 or 13 have been sent to your offices already since the House came back.

The Chair: I can definitely attest to the fact that the clerk's office is very much non-partisan in these issues. I can tell you I had to pay for my own accommodations the last time we went across the country if we had two Liberal members present. So rest assured that's the case.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is allocation of time for questioning: that an organization be given up to ten minutes for their opening statement, and at the discretion of the chair during the questioning of witnesses there be allocated seven minutes for the first questioner of each party and that thereafter three minutes be allocated to each subsequent questioner, alternating between government and opposition parties.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: As you know, I was on the public accounts committee, where sometimes we were limited to four minutes of questioning. I can tell you that you can barely get a decent question out, never mind a decent answer, in a three-minute time span. I really feel that's not a very realistic confinement for any questioner. I would like to see that bumped up, at least to some degree.

The Chair: I actually had some of the same comments for the clerk when I saw it, and he indicated to me that I have to make sure the witnesses respond very directly.

•(1600)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Some members take three minutes for a question.

The Chair: But of course, the same applies to the members. That's a good point, because just looking at the other committees, the agriculture committee has five minutes, justice has three, and human resources has five. Then we have five for foreign affairs, and five for finance. If we were to join the majority of the committees and their practices, we could go with five, if you care to make an amendment.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: I'd like to amend the motion to change it from three minutes to five.

The Chair: We haven't moved this, so maybe you can just make the whole motion.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: I move this motion, changing it from three minutes to five minutes.

The Chair: Okay.

Madam Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: On a point of information, the way this reads grammatically is that three minutes be allocated to each subsequent questioner. The way I read it is that the questioner has three minutes to ask the question, but it doesn't include the answer.

We may want to make sure it includes the question and the answer, if that's what we're talking about here, because I think three minutes is enough to ask a question; it's not enough to get an answer. If I read it according to English grammar, it really says you only give the questioner three minutes.

The Chair: The clerk informs me it means exactly that. You have to ask the question and get the answer within that timeframe.

Hon. Hedy Fry: But that's not what it says here. I just thought you should know, Mr. Farrell.

The Chair: Well, it's the same motion as in every other committee, so it's standard.

Hon. Hedy Fry: I know, but it's not grammatically correct.

The Chair: Madame Faïlle.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faïlle: In the last session, five minutes were allocated for questions during the second round. Therefore, I think Ms. Ablonczy's motion to increase the time allocated from three minutes to five minutes is reasonable.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Ablonczy moved that motion.

Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Just so I can be clear on the actual mechanics of the round, when we come to questioning a witness, the first questioner from each party gets seven minutes. So does that mean there would be a questioner each from the Liberal Party, the Conservatives, the Bloc, the NDP, each getting seven minutes? Then we go into continuing five-minute questions. Does that mean we would alternate between both sides of the table, for instance, and the other Liberal members who haven't already asked a question would each get a three-minute question; then we'd have a Conservative, a Liberal—however many Conservatives are present?

How would it work out at that point? I guess my ultimate question is, when would I get a second question in that process?

The Chair: Good point.

As for the way it reads right now, the human resources committee would be a good one to pick on because the Conservative Party would get its seven minutes, the Bloc would get its seven minutes, the NDP would get its seven minutes, and the Liberal Party would get its seven minutes. Then we'd go to the Conservatives for five minutes, and the Liberals for five minutes. Then we'd go back and forth between the opposition members and Liberals.

Now, it doesn't say that everybody has to ask questions all the time.

Monsieur Clavet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet: Mr. Chairman, could we possibly have the motion formally spell out the order in which parties will speak, as you indicated verbally to us?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, we could do what the human resources committee did, because it makes it much more explicit and clear.

The Clerk: The motion would be that for the first round of questioning it would be the Conservative Party for seven minutes, the Bloc Québécois for seven minutes, the NDP for seven minutes, and then the Liberal Party for seven minutes. The second-round time would include questions and answers—and the same in the first round—the Conservative Party, the Bloc, the Liberal Party, and the NDP would each have five minutes.

•(1605)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Then it would be the Conservatives, because you would go until everybody had five minutes. The NDP would have had seven minutes.

They only have one member, right?

The Clerk: Looking at the human resources committee, in the first round it was seven minutes for all four parties, and then all four parties had another five, and then it went back and forth for the third round.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: It's not that I don't love the NDP—trust me—but the NDP would then have a second round before some members had their first round. So I think every member should have an opportunity to have an intervention, and then we could start over if we wanted to. Otherwise, it would shortchange parties that had more members, which we wouldn't want to do.

The Chair: Okay, that's a good point. Let's try to get this right so everybody can agree on this.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Would it be possible to come back with the proposal to the next meeting? We could pass the basic motion about allocation of the time, and then come back with the order and discuss it then, so we're not doing it on the fly here.

Hon. Hedy Fry: I don't think we're doing anything on the fly. This is how it's always been done. Let's just carry on.

It seems to me it's as clear as it can be that we go seven, seven, seven, seven; then we go five, five, five, five. I think Madam Ablonczy's absolutely right; that's how we should do it. We're complicating matters the way we're dealing with it now.

I think the amendment we're speaking to is five minutes instead of three minutes. Let's just take the amendment, discuss the amended motion, and move. We're making it so complicated, and it's not a complicated issue; it's a particularly simple issue that every committee goes through. That's just the way we've been used to doing it.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: Except for one thing. I think Ms. Ablonczy is alluding to the fact that if we have four members there and we go back and forth and do it on a party basis, a number of people who come to committee will never get an opportunity to ask a question. As much as I really hate agreeing with her, I do.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: It's very frustrating to sit on a committee, to come and never get an opportunity to speak. In fairness to the members, everyone should have an opportunity to speak.

The Chair: This is a good example of what we can get to when members agree with each other. I look forward to those kinds of agreements.

We go through these exercises. This is an important one, because once we have it we deal with it.

The five minutes becomes a bit of a problem when you want to go back and forth that way. If you go seven, seven, seven, and seven, we're talking about 28 minutes. If you go five, five, five, five for the other members, we end up at....

We have two-hour committees, so one round is the first round. That gets rid of four, leaving seven people who haven't spoken. So if they all speak for five minutes, that's 35 minutes. So 28 minutes and 35 minutes—that's about 65 minutes. There's time for the presentation. Then we go back to five and five, and revert to the order.

Would that be fine?

• (1610)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Yes.

The other thing, Bill, is that very rarely does everybody attend. Once everyone has spoken, then every party has another shot at it, basically.

The Chair: Sometimes I can be sitting there on the Liberal side, cheering on the NDP if they have some good line of questioning they're following, and I will pass my turn to speak because I want to see it continue.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Every party is at seven; then you go back and forth until everybody who hasn't had the seven has had five minutes.

Hon. Hedy Fry: That is, everyone who wishes to have it.

The Chair: Monsieur Clavet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet: Could someone reread the motion that we are going to vote on?

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Ablonczy, could you read it?

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: The three would be five, and at the end it would say, between each subsequent questioner, alternating between government and opposition parties, until all members wishing to pose a question or to have an intervention have had an opportunity to do so. Then you could say, at which point, time permitting, another round can commence.

The Chair: We have to make sure we all understand the same thing. Mr. Clerk, can you just read out what you have taken down?

The Clerk: I'll try.

It is moved by Mrs. Ablonczy that an organization be given up to 10 minutes for their opening statement and that at the discretion of the chair during the questioning of witnesses there will be allocated seven minutes for the first questioner of each party and that thereafter five minutes be allocated to each subsequent questioner, alternating between government and opposition parties until all members have had a chance to participate.

Hon. Hedy Fry: It should say, until everyone wishing to pose a question has had an opportunity to do so.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Time permitting, a new round of questioning can commence. We wouldn't want to just say that all you can have is one round if there are only five of us here.

The Chair: I think we spelled out that it starts with the Conservatives and then goes to the Bloc, the NDP, and then the Liberals, so it's not at the discretion of the chair. It just follows the order as it is laid out.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: I was a little worried about “the discretion of the chair” until I realized it was you, Mr. Chairman, and then it was no longer a concern.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Just so I'm clear, when we begin the second round, we're still in five-minute question and answer periods. Is that right?

The Chair: Yes.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1615)

The Chair: We'll move on to "Main/Supplementary Estimates".

It is moved by Mr. Temelkovski that whenever the main estimates or the supplementary estimates are tabled in the House, the committee invite the minister and any relevant senior officials of a department to appear at a televised meeting, if possible, of the committee.

Is there any discussion? Madam Ablonczy.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: I have a concern not just with respect to this motion but that when officials come before the committee, they often say they don't have the information we need. Then we ask them to undertake to provide it to us, but that kind of never happens. I wonder if there could be a way we could instruct the clerk to keep a record, when officials appear, of the undertakings they have given and to report back to the committee in two weeks or whatever as to whether the undertakings have been complied with.

The reason I'm suggesting this is because, as we all know, somehow these just disappear into the ether, and we as members are too busy to keep track of this kind of stuff. We're onto the next thing in the next half-hour and it flies right out of our minds, which is, I think, what the officials count on.

Would members agree it would be helpful for us to have some bird-dogging of this process? There's not a lot of trust here.

The Chair: We definitely will have the clerk keep a count. He informs me that we pretty well always get what the members have requested.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: And we never argue with the clerk.

• (1620)

The Chair: Maybe we can get Ben to do it.

But that's a very good point. We want to make sure we get the information. We want the officials to know we want the information, and we will follow up just in case. Then we have the people who are here now and some who aren't in the audience; you have served notice on it, and that will be very good.

Is there any more discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next, it is moved by Mr. Mark that whenever a chapter of a report of the Auditor General refers to a subject under the mandate of the committee, the committee invite the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and any relevant senior officials of a department to appear at a televised meeting, if possible, of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: In terms of future business, we have the main estimates, and the minister is available on Tuesday, November 2. Now, these are dates we want to deal with. Supplementary estimates

(A) will be tabled on November 4, and the minister is available on Tuesday, November 16. I mention that because those are things the committee wants to deal with in terms of the estimates, and then we can go on to discussion of other future business.

Of course, we have the briefing by the department officials, a departmental overview. It will be useful for new members. We can have it by next Tuesday but we have to give notice. That's for Citizenship and Immigration officials to come and give us an overview of the department. If we can agree on those things, then we can discuss future business beyond that.

The reason you don't have this agenda is that we didn't have time to get it translated—I'm reading it into the record—but that doesn't happen very often.

Do we have agreement on the appearance of the ministers? It is moved by Mr. Siksay.

Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: And then of course we have the briefing by the department officials. Could I get a motion on that?

Madam Faille.

[Translation]

Ms. Meili Faille: I have a question, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

Is the briefing by the minister to be here or is it a separate briefing?

The Chair: No, that will be at committee.

So now we have a motion on the briefing by department officials. It is moved by Mr. Mark.

Is there any discussion on that?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: In terms of discussing future business, we can do this in public or we can do it in camera. It's up to the wisdom of the committee which way you want to proceed.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: I think we're in camera at the moment.

The Chair: No.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: While we're not in camera, then, Mr. Chairman, I would like to propose to the committee that we have a briefing by the parliamentary secretary on the issue of foreign credentials. I know she's been doing a lot of work on that, and I think it would be very helpful for us to have the wisdom and insight she has been able to collect over the last several weeks. If she was willing to do that, I'd certainly like to have it.

The Chair: But let's deal with the issue. Do we want to? In discussing future business of the committee, we can deal with it in camera or we can deal with it in public. As chair, I'd like to see it as transparent as possible. If we tried to do that, it would maybe exhibit some leadership.

Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Chair, I agree about the transparency issue. However, it is tricky, when we're trying to set priorities, to have the kind of argument where one issue may be more important than another. I don't want to be characterized as saying that something that is very important to someone else is not important to me, for instance, so I do think there is something to be said for meeting in camera in that circumstance, just so we can honour the kind of work that's important to other people in that circumstance.

I also want to remind you, Mr. Chair, that you said you were going to have Mr. Dolin introduce himself, so maybe before we move into the in camera session, you might do that as well.

• (1625)

The Chair: Actually, yes. I don't know if you've read the minutes so you know all about the new members of the committee.

Diane, I wonder if you would like to give us an introduction of yourself. It has been a very useful exercise, and it has really made me feel very good about the depth of knowledge and experience we have around this table. I wonder if you could enter it into the record. It will become part of the record of this committee as to your background, your interests, and where you come from.

Then we'll have Madam Beaumier do it as well. I would suggest it makes great copy, and I think it helps Canadians to see that we do have that kind of expertise on this committee.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Well, I've been a member of Parliament 11 years. I have a degree in education and a law degree, both from the University of Calgary. In the 11 years as a member of Parliament I have been the critic for HRDC and the critic for health, and while I was health critic, I personally undertook a survey of European health systems, particularly those of Sweden, Holland, and France, in order to compare and contrast and perhaps get some ideas that might be applicable and helpful to our situation in Canada. I became the senior critic for our party for citizenship and immigration in 2002 and was reappointed after the 2004 election. This is an area that I think is critical because it's a nation-building exercise we're overseeing here, helping us to operate in the best way possible in the interests of our country.

I'm looking forward to this tenure on this committee, however long it may be. I'm very hopeful and believe we can move the ball forward on some key issues because there seems to be, and I believe there is, a lot of consensus and a lot of goodwill on the part of all of us to work for the country and not to put down any roadblocks for partisan purposes.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madam Beaumier.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: Thank you.

I've been a member of Parliament for 11 years, but prior to that I'd been working with resettling immigrants since I was 17. We started with the Czechoslovakians when they moved to a little town in southwestern Ontario.

Without involvement in immigration, my life would have been very, very boring. I would have been a very dull-witted person, because with each group of immigrants come new ideas and knowledge. I tell the Sikh community that they're my energy, my

courage, and my inspiration. I have a passion for immigration, and I'm not a particularly happy camper with the way we're dealing with a number of issues, refugees being one of them, as well as the fact that some of the illegals we have in this country who have been contributing still have no place; we have not been able to deal with them. So if I get a little hysterical and overly passionate in committee, I hope you will all bear with me, because it is something that is very, very important to me.

The Chair: Great.

We have a briefing on foreign credentials, which I like to call international credentials. We can do that Thursday, October 28, if the committee so wishes. Is the committee interested in it?

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: I am as long as it works for the parliamentary secretary.

The Chair: Yes, we got that information from her. Is that okay?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1630)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: But we're meeting twice a week?

The Chair: Yes. We're going to be meeting Tuesday and Thursday from nine to 11—which is as good a schedule as we can get, and we really won the lottery on that one—until Christmas anyway, and then we'll revert to 11 till one but on the same days, so that will be good.

Let's get back to the issue of how we want to do the meetings. We started the discussion on whether or not we want to do future business in camera or whether we want to do it in public, so let's make a decision around that.

Mr. Mark.

Mr. Inky Mark: Mr. Chair, perhaps I could ask the parliamentary secretary a question as to whether the government has impending legislation on citizenship for this committee.

Hon. Hedy Fry: If the committee wishes to deal with citizenship, I think we would like to look at how we would bring back that bill and whether you would have any input into it and could suggest things for the government to do with it. It's been such a controversial bill in the past that we think we need to get some very strong input from this committee.

Mr. Inky Mark: So the government has no plans currently to reintroduce the bill in the House?

Hon. Hedy Fry: If we have input, yes, we plan to reintroduce it. If you give us input on the bill, we plan to introduce it.

Mr. Inky Mark: When did you start practising like that?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Well, we wanted to reintroduce it, but we would like input before we introduce it. We would like to hear what you have to say about it, what suggestions you have on the controversial issues. It sounds unusual that government wants your input before—

Mr. Inky Mark: It is abnormal, actually; it's abnormal practice on the part of the government.

Hon. Hedy Fry: No, but it's a good idea for government to get input before we do something sometimes.

The Chair: Just on that issue, we are in a new Parliament—

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: We should decide whether we're going to go in camera.

The Chair: Let's deal with how we're going to deal with future business. Do you want to discuss it in camera or do you want to discuss it in open committee? If the committee feels better about doing it in camera, I'm quite fine with that, but what's the thought around the table?

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: I sometimes think that for members of the governing party, being in camera is probably a lot safer. It makes us feel a little freer to say what we...and criticize. Do you know what I'm saying?

I don't mind. I've never been known for being particularly discreet or genteel. It might be kind of nice to be able to say whatever you want in extremes, even if you want to say it just for a momentary release of passion.

The Chair: Well, we could go in camera for the discussion and then decide, because I want all committee members to feel as comfortable as they can.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: That's only my opinion. I don't really care.

The Chair: I really want to operate through consensus in this committee because I think the issues we're dealing with go beyond partisanship.

Madam Faillie.

Ms. Meili Faillie: When it's recorded, is the recording kept for a certain time?

The Chair: In camera? Yes, it is, and we have that motion we adopted earlier on concerning routine procedures.

Ms. Meili Faillie: So it's preserved for future sessions as well.

The Chair: Yes.

Monsieur Clavet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet: It is my understanding that some members would like to see as much transparency as possible. In my view, we should adopt the principle of transparency and openness all the while opting for in camera meetings when committee members so desire.

•(1635)

[*English*]

The Chair: Diane.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: I was going to suggest that maybe someone make a motion, and then we could have something to debate. Maybe you could, Bill, since you spoke up.

The Chair: Mr. Temelkovski.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: I like what Bill said there. This is my first time at the committee. There may be some issues we don't want recorded, where we would like to say something more privately and not have it taped, so I move that we do have it in camera and not recorded.

The Chair: Mr. Boshcoff.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, are there standard guidelines in terms of what the reasons are that committees go in camera? Is it because of litigation, because an identifiable individual might be named? Is it for the good of the realm and those types of things that are set standards? Maybe the clerk has an answer.

The Clerk: I think it's for a frank conversation between members; that's why they go in camera.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: I see. That's pretty wide open.

The Chair: Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Chair, when committees use the steering committee model, where often agenda is discussed and prioritized, are steering committee meetings in camera or are they public meetings as well?

The Chair: They're in camera but they report to a public meeting. The minutes made during steering committee meetings in camera become public, not with who moved what or whatever but with what decisions were made.

We have a motion by Mr. Temelkovski, so if we go in camera, we can have our session in camera and then come back and do it in public. We're voting that we have the committee of the whole move in camera.

(Motion agreed to)

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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