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CANADA

# Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, February 3, 2005**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Don Boudria**

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## Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Thursday, February 3, 2005

•(1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.)):** Pursuant to what I announced at the last meeting, this morning we will be dealing with the issue of parliamentary reform, not to be confused with electoral reform, which is something we do at least one day a week otherwise.

[Translation]

I would like to ask my colleagues if they would agree to doing what we did the other day, namely to finish our meeting by 12:30 p.m. at the latest. We will need a few minutes to pass one item in the budget. We have to do that today in order to get the Liaison's Committee approval next Tuesday—at least I hope we get it. So this is the last date on which we can do that. With your permission, we will try to finish the first part of the meeting by 12:30 p.m. at the latest.

[English]

This morning we have as our witnesses—although the term is somewhat unusual to describe the officials who are before us, but it is the proper term nonetheless—our Clerk; the Deputy Clerk; and the Principal Clerk Journals Branch, Mr. André Gagnon.

Mr. Clerk, I understand you have a presentation that will include an element of PowerPoint.

**Mr. William Corbett (Clerk of the House):** Indeed it will not be in my presentation, Mr. Chairman. I leave that to *deux adeptes*.

**The Chair:** Okay. In any case, proceed, and when we get to the PowerPoint I'll leave this particular position and chair from another one.

Mr. Clerk, you may proceed.

[Translation]

**Mr. William Corbett:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to be here this morning to update you on the progress we've made with regard to the use of technology in support of the work of the House of Commons and of members, particularly e-filing of notices and e-petitions.

[Translation]

As you know, during the first session of the last Parliament, the House struck a special committee which was asked to “consider and make recommendations on the modernization and improvement of the procedures of the House of Commons”. The Modernization

Committee, as it was generally referred to, was reconstituted in the second session of the 37th Parliament and continued to look at a variety of reform issues. Over the course of its existence, it tabled a total of six reports, a number of which were concurred in by the House.

[English]

Several of the modernization committee's recommendations called for the creation of new information technology-based tools to facilitate the work of members of Parliament in their day-to-day activities. These included a tool to allow members to submit notices and written questions electronically, and another web-based service that would allow Canadians everywhere to create and submit petitions electronically.

**On September 18, 2003, the House adopted the fourth report of the modernization committee. The report contained the following recommendation:**

The committee supports the electronic filing of notice motions and written questions with the Journals Branch of the House of Commons, subject to the development of verification protocols.

House staff began work on the creation of a portal for the e-filing of notices, which would include a security procedure to verify the authenticity of the notices.

[Translation]

The Fourth Report of the Modernization Committee also contained the following recommendation:

The Committee recommends the development of a system for electronic petitions, in consultation with the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The House administration immediately began identifying needs, developing various scenarios and evaluating related procedural issues.

•(1110)

[English]

On March 23, 2004, I appeared before this committee and provided it with an overview of the situation with regard to the use of technology in support of the House and members. As I told the committee at that time, my staff was in the process of researching the submission of notices and the filing of petitions electronically.

[Translation]

I had hoped to be able to make recommendations to the committee by June of 2004, with a project implementation date dependent on the option chosen. However, the dissolution and the general election intervened and the House administration was unable to seek the committee's advice.

[English]

The opening of the new Parliament allowed the administration to bring these matters before this committee. When I appeared before your committee on October 21, 2004, I indicated that these two projects had involved a significant amount of work, and that I would be able to share some results with the committee soon and seek your feedback, guidance, and approval to proceed with the next steps. We're now ready to give you a report on what we've found so far, and again to seek your guidance as to just how to proceed.

[Translation]

I have asked the Deputy Clerk, Audrey O'Brien, who was also the Clerk of the Modernization Committee, as well as the Principal Clerk of the Journals Branch, André Gagnon, to join me this morning. I invite them to present the results of the work that I have been describing.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Clerk.

Will you be making your PowerPoint presentation now, Ms. O'Brien?

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien (Deputy Clerk, House of Commons):** Yes, I think this would be the right time.

**The Chair:** I would invite the other people sitting at this end of the table to change places. You may proceed.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to present the work we did. However, in order not to confuse things, we would like to start by discussing notices of motion,

[English]

that is to say, the question of the filing of notices, e-notices, or

[Translation]

the filing of e-notices.

[English]

We want to discuss that first. Then if it's agreeable to you, we'll go on in a second presentation to the question of petitions, because they are quite separate.

On the matter of notices, as members will know, the procedure now is quite rigorous. Notices and written questions have to be filed in paper version with the Journals Branch, and we insist on an original signed signature by the member who is presenting the notice or the question. Facsimile signatures are not accepted. So some might say it's an antediluvian way of proceeding, but at the same time it reflects our absolute dedication to the notion that putting something on the Order Paper is the sole prerogative of a member, and we have to guard the legitimacy of that right very rigorously.

So that particular principle is one that we wanted to invoke as well, in looking at the notion of filing notices electronically.

• (1115)

[Translation]

Once again, this is a question of security. We want to ensure that the notice comes from the member of Parliament himself or herself. For us that is absolutely crucial.

[English]

So we have to have, as guiding principles...it's really been quite straightforward. We have to have a secure system. At the same time, we don't want to have the security issues so cumbersome as to make the use of the electronic tool even more burdensome than it necessarily has to be. So we also want to strive for simplicity, and the balancing of security and simplicity was something we bore in mind as we proceeded with this.

[Translation]

The other principle, of course, is that the system must be efficient. Our three basic principles were that the system should be secure, simple and effective.

With that, I will turn the floor over to my colleague, André Gagnon, who will explain the procedure we are proposing.

**Mr. André Gagnon (Principal Clerk, Journals Branch, House of Commons):** Thank you very much.

[English]

What you will see is directly from the website, so we will be able to comment on every aspect of it every time. So I suppose, if you have any questions, we wouldn't mind having them at the moment the pictures are there.

[Translation]

What you see here is a Web page which is accessible from any place equipped with the Internet. This is already being used by a number of parliamentarians, for example to access the e-mails you receive in your office.

[English]

On that web page you would have an indication of *avis électronique*, e-notices. It's true that on that web page you would be able to submit an item.

By clicking on it, you would get to what we call the security system, the SecurID pass code. Most members should have received a SecurID card. Essentially it has a number on it that changes every minute or so. With that number you can have access to your e-mail and the e-notices website from anywhere you like.

You would have to enter your usual user name. In my case it's "gagnoa". Then on the next item you would need to insert your PIN number, your personal identification number, which is a different number from this one. Afterward you would need to add a number, which changes regularly.

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** I'm just curious. I think that's a good way to proceed as far as allowing access while guaranteeing security is concerned. I'm just curious as to how many members...because I have asked a number of the Conservative members, and they don't have these cards, because it was on a request basis, as far as I know. When I got mine, it was because I wanted to access my e-mail from my constituency. Obviously, in order to get into the Hill system, which must remain secure, I was given one of those cards. I had to sign for it and everything else.

Do you have any idea how many members currently have cards, know about them already, and know how to access their e-mail off the Hill with those cards—the whole process?

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** Our understanding is that in this Parliament everybody was to have received them as a matter of course. If that's not the case, were you to decide to go ahead with this project, we could certainly arrange for that to be done. It would be part of the implementation.

**Mr. Jay Hill:** We have people shaking their heads right here. We have half a dozen members—

**The Chair:** But Mr. Hill, I'm informed...for instance, I didn't know it, but I have one.

**Mr. Jay Hill:** It's been delivered to your office, but—

**The Chair:** My staff tells me I told one of them to have it for safekeeping. I don't even remember, but my staff reminds me that I did. So apparently they have been issued to us.

May I suggest that's a very small technicality. If we like the program and we don't have the cards, all we have to do is get them. That's not really the issue; it's whether or not we think this is secure, and so on.

**Mr. Jay Hill:** I was just asking where we're at.

**The Chair:** This comes from the third report, I believe, from the modernization committee of the preceding Parliament.

Anyway, perhaps you could continue with the presentation. I'm sure we'll have questions later on various things.

Do you have a question now, Monsieur Godin?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** I would like to make a quick comment. Personally, I have had my card for a long time. However, after the election I received a second one, and I thought everyone had received such a card. I now have two of them.

• (1120)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for this clarification. Please continue.

[English]

**Mr. André Gagnon:** After entering the PIN number with the SecurID card.... That changes every time, and as you know, it's a very secure system, because you need to have a lot of information at the same time. The member needs to have the PIN number in one hand and this card in the other. So even if you lose this card, nobody can access your e-notice system and your e-mail.

From there we would go to the next step, *avis électronique*, e-notices. You choose the language you like.

[Translation]

The first page is the home page, which tells us what the deadlines are, namely the time until which motions or questions may be sent to Journals in order to appear in the next *Notice Paper*.

[English]

As is the case with regular motions that we receive by e-mail, the time used would be the time in Ottawa. As well, there is a phone number there for people who would like to have more information. There's also an indication that it's not because you are sending electronically that it is receivable on procedural grounds.

From there we will go to the left menu bar. If we pretend to put an item on the Notice Paper, right away you will see there is a list, and you can choose what item you would like to put. Essentially,

[Translation]

these are private members' notices of motions.

[English]

You can jointly second a bill or a motion that's already on the Order Paper for private members' business.

[Translation]

The notices of motions for Routine Proceedings, the questions on the *Order Paper*,

[English]

we can essentially put all of the items on the Notice Paper except one, which is bills, because the certification process does not permit us to proceed with them now. I suppose eventually that will certainly be a matter to get on with.

If the person is submitting something but is not sure what he or she is submitting, there is the possibility of including "other". In this case, let's pretend we want to submit a question on the Order Paper. You submit this, and you can see that the window has changed

[Translation]

to request more information from the person submitting the question. For example, if the person answers yes to the question: "Does the member wish a response to his or her question within 45 days?", he or she may indicate immediately to which committee the question could be referred if the answer is not received within 45 days.

[English]

In this case, the committee chosen will be heritage. Then you can include the text. You have a choice of presenting the text directly there, or just adding a document. In this case I would type "text". I've included the question I would like to ask.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Let us assume an employee has already written a text using the Word software, for example. It could then be inserted.

**Mr. André Gagnon:** That is correct.

[English]

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** It occurs to me it might be possible for one of us to make an error in our submission and not actually complete, in an acceptable manner, what we thought we were doing. Based on my experience ordering things over the Internet, a lot of places have required fields, and they usually indicate them with little asterisks. For example, on the question on the Order Paper, it may not be necessary for you to indicate immediately which committee you want it to go to, but it might be essential for you to indicate some of the other items.

Typically they have a little asterisk after the required field, and at the bottom there is a little note explaining what the asterisk means. If you submit it with one of the required fields left empty, it bounces back to you, highlights the required field in red, and says it will not go through.

I don't know if you've taken that into account, but it's something to think about.

• (1125)

**The Chair:** Can that be arranged? I'm not very good at Internet stuff. I know if I try to order an airline ticket or something like that and forget to complete one of those fields, as Mr. Reid said, it bounces right back and says I didn't do it right, do it again, or some such.

**Mr. André Gagnon:** There is already that kind of provision. For instance, if you do not include text there, it could be a problem and it might come back to you, but maybe we can make it clearer.

If you decide that you would like to receive an e-mail of what you've just sent, you would type in your e-mail address, or the e-mail address of someone in your office, submit it, and get a confirmation.

[Translation]

This confirmation is produced on the website. So it is not a message that is sent to you.

[English]

There's a message that has been sent to you because you've given your e-mail address.

[Translation]

The confirmation is quite clear. The confirmation number states the year, the month, the day and the time at which the notice of motion was submitted. So it can be seen immediately whether or not the question was submitted at the right time. There is an indication about the type of matter, whether a response has been requested within 45 days and to which committee the question will be directed if no answer is received. We can also see to whom the e-mail was sent as well as the text of the motion.

By checking our e-mail, we can see that the same information was sent to our inbox. The webpage disappears when we use something else, however this information can be kept as a folder.

[English]

That's the process of putting an item there. I don't think we need to insist more on that.

[Translation]

A text may also be attached. There is a box in which comments may be added at any time. Here's an example: "Please contact Denise, in my office, if there are any problems regarding the question I wish to submit."

[English]

Then you choose the text you would like to include. A Word document can easily be put there. So you indicate which document you want to submit, and that you would like to receive a copy of the submission, and again you include your e-mail address.

[Translation]

In that way, you can include three questions on one page or an existing text which contains all the information. Then the text can be submitted.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You say that we would receive this information by e-mail in our office. Some days we get 1,000 e-mail messages in one day. Sometimes, there are so many of them we do not even want to see what has come in. In such a case, we might not notice when this e-mail arrives. Could a special note be attached to it?

**The Chair:** These days—and I'm thinking of the same-sex marriage issue, which is a very hot topic at the moment—we get a huge number of e-mails. Distinguishing messages that contain information we need from other messages becomes a little like looking for a needle in a haystack. There is just too much information.

How do you plan to deal with this problem?

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** The clerk reminds me that Information Services are in the process of developing a better tool for managing e-mails. In any case, one of the suggestions we might make would be that the confirmation should be sent to a particular individual, rather than in a public e-mail. So, if your legislative assistant...

• (1130)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** My legislative assistant is the one who receives most of the e-mails. We should perhaps suggest rather that there be a special e-mail just for House business. We could check this address in the morning, or at some other time.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** We could certainly discuss this with Information Services. If I understand correctly, your suggestion is that we address the message to "Mr. Godin, House Affairs", rather than "Mr. Godin, Member of Parliament, assistant 1, assistant 2, assistant 3".

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Yes.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** We will be consulting Information Services about this. I understand your dilemma, but I honestly don't know whether the change can be made. We are taking your suggestion under advisement.

**The Chair:** I would like to come back to what Mr. Godin said. Let's say that I am at home, and send a request to move a motion that the government name Hawkesbury an extraordinary city—which it is. Can I require that answers be sent to my own e-mail address at home?

The problem indicated by Mr. Godin may occur somewhat less often than we think. When we are here, we can send it physically. However, if we are at home and receive the answer at home, that answer will not be mixed up with 250 other e-mails, because presumably we do not receive as many e-mails at home. Would this be a partial solution?

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** Yes, you can choose where you want to receive the answer. If you are on a trip and wish to receive the answer wherever you happen to be, you can. However, you do always need a connection that gives you access to Extraparl. This is not a problem at your home.

**Mr. André Gagnon:** In fact, it is not a problem anywhere.

**The Chair:** I have a supplementary, if I may ask it. I apologize to my colleagues. Many members of Parliament have BlackBerry devices. I am looking at one right now. Can these e-mails be sent to our BlackBerry devices?

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** You can receive a confirmation on BlackBerry, but you cannot send one through BlackBerry because in our opinion that system is not sufficiently secure, and we cannot be sure that you are in fact the message originator. We have to go through SecurID, the two-factor authentication system.

[English]

So a BlackBerry doesn't have a SecurID for sending, but we could certainly send a confirmation to your BlackBerry.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** I am not saying that what Mr. Godin is asking for is not needed. In fact, I think it is a very good idea. But there are other solutions, such as using BlackBerry, or other means.

Mr. Corbett, you have the floor.

**Mr. William Corbett:** I would like to add something here. I know that Information Services is experimenting with e-mail management tools that would enable an e-mail with

[English]

a subject header be pitched automatically to a particular file and kept there.

So there are probably more than one or two ways of addressing the problem raised by Monsieur Godin, but we'll certainly raise it with our informatics people, and it'll be part of any rollout when we get to it, if the committee agrees to this as a plan.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Longfield.

[English]

**Hon. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Oshawa, Lib.):** That technology already exists. I already have a certain number of folders set up. Anything with a key phrase goes to a folder immediately and is transferred immediately to my BlackBerry.

• (1135)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Let's move on. Are there any other questions? No? Then go ahead, please.

[English]

**Mr. André Gagnon:** On submitting notices, certainly I think we've covered it.

[Translation]

There are other items in the menu on the left. For example, if you wish to look at existing procedure manuals, here you will find the Standing Orders, the glossary on Parliamentary procedure, and so on. All information on procedure is also available. This could be useful for some people.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** That's right. The desire to submit motions electronically demonstrates a certain amount of zeal. We felt that information on procedure would be of particular interest to you.

**Mr. André Gagnon:** Sometimes, things are somewhat more complicated, for example, submitting motions at report stage or just having a bill drafted. Here, we find information for reaching the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel's office.

[English]

Finally, there's the button to close the session. If you are at your computer to present notices and all of those things, you want to close the session to prevent other persons who use your computer right afterwards from submitting notices in your name. So you can just close the session by clicking on the button to log off.

[Translation]

Of course, by clicking on this button we can move from one official language to the other at any time.

[English]

I think that covers it.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Will there be some kind of mechanism to shut this down automatically after a certain number of minutes? I think this is something we should have. Basically, when this is open, your signature can end up on anything. So after a given period—perhaps 30 minutes—I would like this to be shut down. If we have not finished in 30 minutes, then too bad—we will have to start over again. Perhaps this period should be longer or shorter than 30 minutes—we can agree on it. But there has to be some way of shutting this down because I worry about the concept of opening up my signature and leaving it open.

[English]

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** Forgive me for not introducing our adviser, Ian McDonald, who's with us today. He's one of our star information people. He tells us that this functionality does exist, and we always believe Ian.

**Mr. Jay Hill:** Thirty minutes.

**Mr. Ian McDonald (Technology Liaison Coordinator, House of Commons):** The standard for banking is 10 minutes.

**The Chair:** Are there any further questions? If not, please continue.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Gagnon:** Basically, there is no other information to be provided on this website.

[English]

I don't know if you want to go through the recommendation itself.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** Yes. I think we'll leave it then to the Clerk to sum up our recommendations in this regard.

**Mr. William Corbett:** Thank you, Audrey.

We're basically recommending that the committee approve the proposed e-notice website and that we be authorized to roll it out and put it in place by April 1, 2005. Our third recommendation is that the SecurID be used as the access tool.

Those are the decisions we are asking the committee to agree to.

**The Chair:** If this ends the PowerPoint part, we can press on to all the questions.

Mr. Hill.

**Mr. Jay Hill:** I just have an observation. Is there any strategic implication in rolling this out on April Fool's Day?

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** It shows our traditional clerkly fearlessness.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Johnston.

• (1140)

[English]

**Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** We're going to file petitions electronically. The requirement now, of course, is that we sign the back of each petition. Would this secure card do in lieu of a petition?

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** I should stress that this is only with regard to notices. Petitions are a whole other story. Once you finish your questions on notices, we'll be happy to get into petitions, because they have turned out to be more of a swampland than we originally anticipated.

**Mr. Dale Johnston:** I'm sorry. I was given to believe that was the end of the presentation.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** It was the end of the presentation on notices, sorry. We'll be moving Mr. Boudria shortly, because of petitions.

**The Chair:** Okay, next question.

**Mr. Dale Johnston:** It will be revealed in due time, I'm sure.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Generally, our legislative assistant deals with all papers and documents. With this system, could she do everything she needs to do in one place, and then transfer the package? For example, let's say I am at my office in

Bathurst while my assistant is at my office in Ottawa. She prepares everything she needs to prepare, and then uses the system to transfer it to where I am. I sign everything in Bathurst, or wherever I am, by accessing the system to sign from wherever I happen to be. If we cannot do this, as I understand it, almost all the work is going to come back to us, while we are paying someone else to do it.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** Mr. Chairman and Mr. Corbett, the reason we decided to go with the SecurID card was in fact to make members' work easier. There are frequent discussions between the member and his or her legislative assistant. The legislative assistant prepares the question, or the notice of motion, in accordance with the member's instructions. Once the work is done and approved by the member, it can be transmitted by telephone, provided the legislative assistant has a SecurID card. The legislative assistant can use the member's identification number. In many cases, members give their identity cards to an assistant, particularly since they use BlackBerries most of the time. They delegate details to their legislative assistants. You can delegate this too, but you have to be aware of what you are doing.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Few members will wish to do that.

Personally, I don't think it's a good idea. However, I do believe that the legislative assistant can do it all by telephone. So if I am in Bathurst and need to see the documents, can they be transferred electronically so that I can see them and approve them where necessary?

**Mr. André Gagnon:** In fact, before doing that, the assistant could send you an e-mail with the prepared motion, indicating that you have discussed it and asking whether you approve it.

After you authorize it, the assistant can go ahead with it on your behalf, using the card given to you and using your ID number.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** This means the legislative assistant would deal with it, but not the member.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** It would be done that way only if the member wanted to entrust the assistant with this task.

[English]

**Mr. William Corbett:** Fine.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Casey.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC):** I don't have any questions at the moment. I don't think I got one of those cards. Did you say they were sent to everybody?

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** I believe that in this Parliament the cards were sent to everybody, but in many cases they were perhaps part of a whole lot of things that were sent to you. Your staff may have squirrelled your card away because you're not someone who particularly wants to use it, and they know that.

• (1145)

**Mr. Bill Casey:** Does it generate a unique number for my account every minute, or is it one unique number for everybody?

**A voice:** Each card.



**Mr. Bill Casey:** So there's a unique number for each card.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Longfield.

[English]

**Hon. Judi Longfield:** I might help Mr. Casey. I've had one since I've been a member, and I asked for one in 1997.

In this recent Parliament, when they upgraded the software on your Hill computers, with that package was an envelope that had the SecurID inside. I know it sat in a drawer with all of the documentation for quite some time. Then my staff member was cleaning it out and said, "I forgot to give this to you". It was just in an envelope and came with that big bundle of packages.

I talked to other members after that, and they found theirs subsequently, with all of that other information.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Picard.

**Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** What happens if we notice some kind of problem with a question on the *Order Paper*? Will you write to us? How will you communicate with us?

**Mr. André Gagnon:** Most of the time we would communicate by telephone, as we do now for notices of motions received by regular mail. We are often in touch by telephone. There would also be the option of dropping comments into boxes indicating that a certain person should be contacted, for example. E-mail could also be used. A great deal of business is already conducted by e-mail. We receive a great number of motions in advance, with a request that we verify them. Then we discuss them, and the notice is printed and signed. So the same procedure...

[English]

**The Chair:** A very able researcher who was assisting me pointed out—and please correct us if we don't have it quite right—that when you put it in as an attachment, there's a comment section. But when there are no comments and you submit text directly, does that thing still appear?

[Translation]

**Mr. André Gagnon:** No, the comment box does not appear, but you can include comments where the motion is entered.

**The Chair:** Could we not have the comment box appear anyway, to show people submitting something that there is a place to add comments?

**Mr. André Gagnon:** Yes, it could be done.

**The Chair:** Do our technicians think this is being done?

I have a question about the current procedure. I am not sure that it is as secure as we believe. Let me give you an example: I have a colour fax at home, and another in my parliamentary office. Using two colour faxes, I can write something on my computer at home, sign it in blue, and fax it. It emerges at the other end, and my assistant takes it to your office. How would you know this was not the original document? I cannot tell the original and the fax apart.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** We rely on your word and on the word of your assistant to consider the signature on the document we receive

to be original. As you say, current technology makes it almost impossible to determine whether a signature is in fact original.

**The Chair:** What I am trying to make you understand is that the system you are setting up is more secure than the one we have now.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** It probably is, yes.

**The Chair:** I know full well that my signature has been scanned into the computer so that it could be put on letters—with my permission, of course. However, it remains that it is not my original signature. Sometimes, I am not even there. This is done frequently, with my permission. What would be unfortunate is if this were to be done without permission. I do not have your technical knowledge—as you can tell from my questions—and certainly not the technical knowledge of Mr. McDonald, our expert, but I can see that the system you are instituting seems more secure than the one we have now.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** You are probably right. In fact, as Mr. Godin pointed out, members themselves rarely submit their own notices or prepare their own questions. This work is delegated to assistants. What we are recognizing in this project is a means of delegating it officially, by giving the SecurID card to an assistant. This would mean that the assistant in question had the member's full trust. As does, of course, the assistant who brings us the motion or notice you faxed from your home, if I come back to the example you gave a few moments ago.

● (1150)

**The Chair:** I see. Thank you for that explanation.

Mr. Guimond, do you have a question?

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** This is more of a comment, or I might even call it a wish. I don't know whether my colleagues on the committee and the clerk's team would agree, but I think that it would not be a bad idea to organize a general information session to present this new system to our colleagues, a session open to anyone interested. We should allow for the possibility that members be accompanied or replaced by their assistants. We are certainly not all equally familiar with computer technology. My staff is very skilled, but I myself am not really computer-literate. I know I am using the right term, but it's only because I have heard it.

**The Chair:** That is an extremely pertinent comment, Mr. Guimond. It is also a very honest one. Many of us are exactly in the same boat, including your humble servant, but did not dare say so.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Well, I wanted to show humility, Mr. Chairman. I do so like having you tell me that I am humble! I am less likely to feel big-headed.

**The Chair:** Mr. Corbett, perhaps the whips could get together on this. I think we might say that the service is available, and the whips can organize information sessions with their caucuses. Would that be all right?

**Mr. William Corbett:** Of course, Mr. Chairman. We could organize information sessions, either at caucuses through the whips, or have several in the same week in the same room. We could notify all members that the sessions are being held. It would not be a problem. We should also remember to notify staff, for whom these sessions are important.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** In my view, this is like adopting a new formula. I don't think we need to call all members to a meeting to determine whether we accept the recommendation. If we institute the new system, we should just ensure that all assistants attend the information session, so that they all know how to use the system.

**The Chair:** I think we are essentially saying the same thing. We are not going to put this to a vote by members. If I understand correctly, we are talking about organizing information sessions for all those who wish to use the method. Our committee's role is to approve this. Then our report is concurred in by the House, and that's it. This is how we make it official. What you are talking about are briefings, or information.

Mr. Corbett, then Ms. Boivin.

**Mr. William Corbett:** Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to reassure members. The traditional way of sending a motion to Journals will still be in place. Those who wish to continue using the paper system will have no problems whatsoever. We are not replacing the old system, but simply adding a second option.

**The Chair:** Now there is a second part, and you are going to explain why petitions are so complicated. In any case, we already had some idea of it.

**Mr. William Corbett:** Do you suggest that this be passed as a recommendation, now or at the end?

**The Chair:** I was going to deal with this at the end, but we can deal with it now.

What is the will of the committee? Are you satisfied with the proposal that we establish a new system for transmitting notices of motions? I will just reiterate that this would not replace the current system, but simply provide a second option. Would anyone like to speak?

Mr. Guimond.

• (1155)

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** I will agree with this, but it remains that my primary concern relates to citizens who contact me and wish to prepare electronic petitions. That's why I would have preferred that we approve this only after we had been given a comprehensive presentation. The witness should not oblige us to commit ourselves immediately. I would like to see the whole picture.

**The Chair:** So why don't we listen to the whole presentation. We can deal with our motions at the end of the meeting. In any case, that is how we usually do it.

Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chairman, even if the system does not work for petitions, we should not forget the first part of what we've heard.

**The Chair:** Yes, but I don't wish to anticipate what our colleagues will decide at the end of the meeting. Let's hear the second part of the presentation now. Then, events can take their course.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As the clerk was saying earlier, on September 18, 2003, the House adopted the Fourth Report of the Special Committee on the

Modernization and Improvement (SCMI) of the Procedures of the House of Commons. The report contained the following recommendation:

The Committee recommends the development of a system for electronic petitions, in consultation with the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

A working group was established to study recent initiatives.

[English]

We have found that only the Parliament of Queensland, one of the states in Australia, and the Parliament of Scotland, in the United Kingdom, have in place electronic petition systems. The present study also examined other public and private sites that are used to collect signatures and names.

It's useful to mention, first of all, that any notion of an electronic petition must have a place of residence.

[Translation]

We're talking about a place where the signatures or electronic names are collected.

There are three options available to parliamentarians: the Parliamentary Internet site; a third-party site (organization or individual); or the personal site of an MP or the site of a political party.

[English]

So we have those three options: the parliamentary Internet site; the third-party site; and the personal site of the MP, or the site of a political party.

Since this was the House's first foray into the world of electronic petitions, the working group focused on its study of options that involved the use of the existing parliamentary website. We looked at five key issues: the authenticity of signatures, the uniformity of the rules and practices that apply to paper petitions as well as to electronic petitions, the level of interactivity with and participation by citizens, the culture of petitions, and the cost and infrastructure.

It's important for us to emphasize the question of the culture of petitions. It's very well established in this country. During the 15-year period from April 1989 to December 2004, more than 30,000 paper petitions were presented in the House. In this context, the introduction of a system of electronic petitions could present certain challenges in the volume of petitions processed and presented.

The trials currently being conducted on electronic petitions are being used in assemblies where the volume of paper petitions is far lower than the volume that the House of Commons sees. In addition, the jurisdictions of the assemblies of Queensland and Scotland are not nearly as extensive as those of the House of Commons, and they're not federal in nature. So the content of the petitions, as we've been able to ascertain, has very much the flavour of a regional government. "Will you or won't you put up a satellite tower in this sheep pasture?" The redress being requested by the petition is usually fairly straightforward, as opposed to the more conceptual kinds of petitions that are regularly presented here in the House of Commons, which have to do with the public being in favour of, or not supporting, certain pieces of complex legislation, certain policy initiatives, or a certain approach to a particular societal question.

So in light of those practical and jurisdictional considerations, we would like to advise not clerkly fearlessness, but that clerkly caution be exercised before we start implementing a system of electronic petitions. I'll turn it over to my colleague André Gagnon to talk about the work that's been done to date.

It's important to note what you're going to be seeing with this, as opposed to what you saw on the notices. The notices are basically something we've added to Extraparl. That work is already done, and we're ready to roll that out in April,

•(1200)

[Translation]

with the required briefing and training sessions for staff.

[English]

In the case of petitions, what you're seeing is really a shell that we've created. This is what it would look like. It hasn't yet been created, because we wanted to first of all have a discussion with you. If you do decide to go ahead, despite the caveats, we're recommending that it be this kind of approach. But this is only the shell that we've created. We really have a long way to go before the actual implementation of such a petition.

I guess the other thing we're concerned about in terms of the culture of petitions is that right now, as Mr. Guimond was saying, it's a link between the citizenship and the members. That is to say, a member who is concerned about a particular thing in the riding will get in touch with a like-minded member perhaps in another riding. So it's a citizen's link with the actual member.

In this case there will be a role for the member, which we have kept and have tried to safeguard in the preparation of this approach, but at the same time, because it will allow people from all different parts of the country to sign on, the sense of geographical belonging will be far less present.

André.

**Mr. André Gagnon:** This is essentially a prototype, and there is no motor behind it, so we can't work with all of the buttons you see there. But you'll see there are certainly enough there for us to get a good sense of what an e-petition website could look like.

[Translation]

The first page is of course the home page, similar to the one on all the parliamentary sites we found. Once again, we will go through each of the items in the menu on the left-hand side of the page.

[English]

Again, if you have any questions, we certainly feel comfortable answering them as we go.

[Translation]

Most individuals using this site would want to know first what petitions it contains so that they can sign one if they wish.

•(1205)

[English]

We'll go through the first item,

[Translation]

“Current-E-Petitions”,

[English]

or “current petitions”. You have examples of three petitions. There could be 50, 100, or 200 petitions at the same time on the website. You could proceed by working with key words that you would put there. For instance, “apples” is quite an easy one because it's right there, and we could easily go to the next one.

[Translation]

By clicking on that, we can do a search of all active positions. The information that appears there is quite simple. We have here the subject of the petition. All subjects would appear in this column. There is also a column showing the number of people who have signed the petition. The closing date is the date on which the person who presented the petition, that is the originator of the petition, known as the “principal petitioner”, decided to withdraw the petition from the website, because a closing date is required in order for a petition to appear on the website.

The usual time periods in other jurisdictions vary between one week and six months. That is what would be proposed here. The principal petitioner would determine when the closing date would be.

[English]

At the end you would have the principal petitioner's name and the province where that person came from.

We played a lot with that concept, but when we had difficulty with how to answer the different questions, we always came back to the mall experience. When a person at the mall is asking you to sign a petition, you see that person—at least you know that person. In this case, we found it important that the name of the person and the province where that person came from appeared there, so the principal petitioner was known by the person wanting to sign the petition.

So that's essentially the information you would find there. You would look at the different petitions and choose one that you would like to at least look at the content of. So in this case we're talking about apples.

[Translation]

WHEREAS:

1. Apples are good for your health;
2. Harvesting apples creates thousands of jobs in Canada;

we, residents of Canada, call upon Parliament to enact legislation to designate the third Monday of September as National Apple Day.

[English]

So we essentially tried to find a motherhood-and-apple-pie kind of statement. That is certainly one.

[Translation]

Anyone wishing to sign the petition would just click here; then the person would be asked to provide some information, which is very similar to the information normally requested in the case of regular petitions.

We will proceed quickly. In the case we are considering, I entered my name and address. There is also a space for the e-mail address. I stress this, because we will come back to it later. This is the usual information that would be requested in the case of regular petitions.

At the moment, many people include their e-mail address in paper petitions.

[English]

So essentially the person has decided they want to sign this petition. The question we asked ourselves at the beginning was to make sure, for the petitions that would eventually be tabled in the House, the names that appeared in the petitions were true.

[Translation]

The other issue we wanted to deal with was the security of petitions. In other words, we did not want the petition site to be controlled by someone who had managed to devise a system to copy out the telephone book onto a petition.

[English]

So the next two steps will help us try to meet those two objectives at the same time.

[Translation]

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.):** Does that mean that one person cannot sign a second time using another name, but keeping the same e-mail address? Would it make it impossible to create an indefinite number of e-mail addresses? An indefinite number can be created using Hot mail, for example. That means that Mr. So-and-So could sign the same petition several times. Is the system secure in this regard?

**Mr. André Gagnon:** I think we have to put that into perspective, and compare it to the current situation. At the moment, citizens may sign their name to a petition or sign their neighbour's name, because nothing is done to authenticate the person's identity. That is also true of e-petitions, except that because of technology, the 800 handwritten signatures that a person could place on a paper petition could become 850,000 electronic names in the space of 15 minutes.

The exponential possibilities provided by technology mean that we had to introduce some more rigorous procedures. However, situations of the type you mentioned could happen, just as they can happen with paper petitions as well.

**The Chair:** Mr. Guimond.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** I have two questions. I'm referring to the electronic petition underway. Did you only think about the name and the province of the main petitioner? In the second example you gave, you wrote in the association to which the person signing belonged. I wonder if it's relevant for us to get into that. It's easier to answer the first question, but I have a second one.

What happens if somebody gets a petition going that's really racist and really flies in the face of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms? For example, I'm thinking about someone who would voluntarily get a petition going saying that the people of a given race should not have the right to run as candidates in an election. That would fly in the face of the Charter. We can't control the input.

I know that you'll tell me that anybody could get that kind of petition going, a petition saying, for instance, that women shouldn't be allowed to run as candidates in elections. Anybody can originate any kind of off-the-wall petition. However, to have it tabled, you have to go through one of the 300 members—I'm excluding the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the House of Commons. You have to find somebody to carry the ball once you're there. On the other hand, with a system like that one, any goof can get any kind of racist petition going.

What kind of filter would prevent that sort of situation?

● (1210)

**Mr. André Gagnon:** To answer your first question, I forgot to mention—and I'm sorry—that there would be three pieces of information that could be entered under the name of the main petitioner. The third piece of information that could be entered is the name of an organization. We noticed that in real life, in shopping centres where you have people getting others to sign petitions, those petitions are often sponsored by community groups, organized groups who put their name to a petition. That was simply to reflect that situation.

Other legislative assemblies require a lot more detail, for example the address of the organization. Sometimes there is even the personal address of the individual. So our judgment was that with that kind of recommendation, we would be looking for a sort of compromise as to the information to be given.

To answer your second question, there are already mechanisms under which certain petitions can't be introduced, for all kinds of reasons. After a member concludes that a petition can be presented, he submits it to the Private Members' Business Office, which also deals with petitions, and that is when it is determined whether the petition should be certified or not.

When we deal with this later and we look at how to present a petition, the person who decides...

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** You're not answering my question. My question deals with the advance filter. Any crackpot can get a petition going on the site. You don't have to convince me by saying that the petitions clerk will delay it, that the member... if I get a petition requesting that aboriginal people not have the same rights as other Canadian citizens, I'll say that it doesn't make any sense and I'll refuse to have it tabled. Even if you've got 10,222 signatures on it, it blatantly flies in the face of the Charter, it's racist.

What I asked you before was whether there was an advance filter to prevent a petition like that from even getting on the site. What are you going to do?

**Mr. André Gagnon:** Before the petition appears on the site for citizens to be able to sign it, it must first have been certified in advance. We're getting ahead of ourselves; I didn't want to talk about that right away, but I must say that anyone who wants to submit a petition will have to go through the different stages of a process before that petition gets onto the site.

**The Chair:** And who will certify it, Mr. Gagnon?

**Mr. André Gagnon:** It will be certified by the petitions clerk, the same person who certifies the petitions at the present time.

**The Chair:** Could I suggest that you think about this; I would also invite my colleagues to think about it. I think that as soon as petitions appear on the screen, they belong to the public domain, as is the case when they are tabled in the House in the usual way. In that respect, we are just changing the portal.

Why not include, in the process, the obligation that a member sign his name to a petition before it appears on the screen? Then, the member in question would be known to all other members, and accountable. If someone decides to associate with Ernst Zundel, or with a cause working to have Adolf Hitler's birthday declared a national holiday, or some such other idiocy, the other members could always take that member to task. On the other hand, in this case, only the clerks are responsible. I do not want to minimize the role of the clerks, but it is a lot more difficult for parliamentarians to hold employees accountable, and it is a lot more difficult for employees to question a member's actions, than it is to interact with parliamentary colleagues. As you know, we can be rather brutal with one another when a member's behaviour is felt to be unacceptable.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** I think that what you can now see on the screen gives... We put that up on the screen to give you an example of how to start a petition. This example, dealing with apples, may be giving the wrong impression. Nothing is going to appear on the public screen before having undergone a verification process. The suggestion you are making, which is that the member be associated with the petition in advance, would work very well. If we can carry on, I think that the presentation will answer your questions.

• (1215)

**The Chair:** Mr. Guimond, did you have a supplementary question?

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Yes. I am not sure that I am ready to go that far. Even within the caucus, it might wind up before the whips, and something diametrically opposed to the party's fundamental program might be picked up.

I don't want members to have to act as censors when it comes to the citizens' ultimate right to table a correct, acceptable, non-racist petition. I am not sure I want to have that power, as a member. There is going to be caucus management. Maybe it is because I am a whip and you are not anymore, but I am not sure that I am ready to go that far. I want all citizens to have the freedom to express themselves through a proper petition. The clerk of petitions has my full confidence.

**The Chair:** We can debate it. I only wanted to point out that at this time, the filter already exists. A matter enters the public domain when it reaches the threshold of the House and a member is required for it to be tabled. That is why I thought that we needed a member at the other end, because it is going to a different place in the public domain, but the test remains the same. That is why I was suggesting it. I am not married to the idea if you have a better one, but I simply wanted to avoid...

Although there are several political parties, independent members and all the rest of it, amongst ourselves, I think we always manage to find our way.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** However, there are ways of tabling petitions with which we do not agree. In my case, someone in my riding originated a petition to restore the death penalty. The people

behind this petition came to see me in my office with 400 signatures. I said that I was their representative, and that I would take their petition to Ottawa and table it. But when I actually tabled the petition, in the 10- or 12-second preamble I indicated that I was tabling a petition with which I did not personally agree, but was nonetheless tabling on behalf of the 434 signatories in my riding who supported it. Of course you need a member to table a petition in the House.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** With the current procedure, I did not think that it was up to the clerk to decide whether the content of a petition warranted that it be tabled, or not. The clerk's role is rather to see how many people have signed the petition, and if the petition itself is in order.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** The clerk of petitions checks the content.

**Ms. Pauline Picard:** We should go further. We will obtain some answers later.

**Ms. Audrey O'Brien:** We are happy to see that you have confidence in us, Mr. Guimond. However, we would not be particularly comfortable with making certain decisions, such as deciding what sort of petitions should be on the Parliament site, even for signing. You yourself acknowledge that this is an issue which would have to be debated in depth.

Let's quickly go through the remainder of this, because it will give you some...

**The Chair:** We only have 15 minutes left.

[*English*]

Do you want to proceed?

**Hon. Judi Longfield:** I agree with what both Michel and Yvon are saying. The only thing I would say is that a paper one can say a lot of really defamatory things if it's just handed around, but once it gets posted on a government site there's some legitimacy to it. So I'd like that kind of pre-screening.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Please go on with your presentation. Perhaps you could summarize what remains of it.

**Mr. André Gagnon:** Let's go back to where we were.

Let's say that the user has provided all the information needed, and decides to move to the next stage. Earlier, we were talking about finding a way of avoiding electronic abuse, as it were. We also discussed how signatures would be authenticated.

In the example before us, the next stage is specifically designed to prevent abuse. The image you see can not be read by a computer, but only by the human eye. The information in this box changes regularly, and anyone who wishes to sign a petition is just asked to enter the code read off this box. It's as simple as that. This is basically a way of preventing existing and future software—that is where we're at—of copying the telephone directory and adding all those names to a petition. This operation prevents any program from doing such a thing.

This page also sets out all the conditions that a person must meet to sign the petition. For example, you have to be a Canadian citizen, you must not have already signed the e-petition, and the particulars you have provided must be correct. A person can sign the petition on behalf of someone else, in cases where the other person has a disability and is physically incapable of signing the petition himself.

• (1220)

[English]

The next page is one where we would be in a position to give more authenticity to the signatures given.

[Translation]

Before this stage, the system has already requested an e-mail address, so at this stage the person can simply click on the button and see that the system sends an e-mail to the person whose e-mail address is on the previous page. This is to ensure that we are not given thousands of fictitious e-mail addresses. There will have to be some other mechanism. The person who signs the petition will have to complete the process to ensure that his name is actually added to the petition.

Now, if I look into the in-box of my e-mail program...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** You were talking about fictitious addresses, but a person could genuinely have three different e-mail addresses.

**Mr. André Gagnon:** Yes.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** How can we determine whether all those addresses are genuine?

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Let's say that someone called Lise Lavoie signs the petition from her principal residence, then from her cottage, and again from her partner's home. So she can sign the petition three times. But the clerk of petitions would realize that the signatures were identical, and wipe them off. One person can have several addresses.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** In my riding of Bathurst alone, there are four or five people called Yvon Godin, and they have different addresses.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** They look at the signatures. If the signatures are the same...

**Mr. André Gagnon:** In order for a petition to be deemed in order, it must contain 25 valid signatures. If we have 90 or 100, and two or three have been added, the process will not change. We need 25 signatures.

**Ms. Pauline Picard:** You need the person's e-mail address.

**Ms. Françoise Boivin:** How do you verify signatures? I could sign as "Françoise Boivin", then as "Sylvie Latrémouille", then again under another name. And I can create an e-mail address very easily every time. I could do this in 15 minutes.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** There are criteria to be met. If everybody is using the same pen and has the same writing, the signatures are wiped. Sometimes, we receive petitions where we can see that the telephone directory, or something close to it, has been copied out with the same pen and in the same writing. But if the petition contains 182 signatures and at least 25 of them are obviously different, then the petition will be deemed in order.

**The Chair:** Colleagues, we have seven minutes left. We may not have time to make any decisions today, but we could perhaps at least hear the rest of the presentation and come back to this if you wish.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Michel is talking about signatures. In this case, there are no signatures.

• (1225)

**The Chair:** Of course, we are agreed.

Could you try to summarize the presentation?

**Mr. André Gagnon:** The deficiencies we may find in an e-petition system are basically the same as the deficiencies we can identify in a paper petition system. We have tried to do everything we could to prevent petitioners from copying out directories.

This is the e-mail message the person received, and once the person clicks on the address indicated, his or her name is added to the petition, and that addition is confirmed. So there is a process to identify the person signing, and to authenticate that person. There's also a process to prevent some technological manoeuvres from being used.

[English]

There's also the possibility of taking a look at what petitions were tabled in the House. Those were closed, essentially. Again, there could be a list of 200 petitions there. You could search them by using a keyword, or you could just go down the list.

What you have there are all of the petitions that are closed. So I'll just go through the different columns. You could take a look at the subject of the petition and the number of persons who signed a petition.

[Translation]

There is also the deadline—the date on which it was removed from the signature website,

[English]

the name of the person and the organization, the date it was presented in the House, the member of Parliament who presented the petition, and the number given to the petition.

On the last line, the government always gives a response to the petition. You could have access to the response given by the government. So it would be possible for those who signed the petition or saw a petition to close the loop. A grievance is expressed in a petition, and at the end of a process you could see the response given by the government.

[Translation]

The e-mail address requested when the person signs the petition would also be used when a parliamentary secretary or a minister tables a response to a petition in the House. An e-mail would automatically be sent to the person, providing the e-mail address, as well as the response tabled by the government. One might say that this completes the process. The process begins with a grievance, and ends with an answer. I know that we have very little time left. All the information is provided in this package. An e-petition can be started. It is the first stage in presenting an e-petition and submitting it to the clerk of petitions to see whether it is in order.

The menu bar on the left provides access to a guide, information on the history of petitions, information on petitions, instructions on starting a paper petition, and instructions on petitioning the House of Commons. This is additional information on the petitions policy. There is also a confidentiality policy. Information collected on each petitioner is deleted once a certain period has elapsed after the government's response has been conveyed to petitioners. A paper petition would bear the names of individual signatories, along with their names and addresses. On the website, only the name of the principal petitioner appears.

[*English*]

It doesn't show the names of the other persons who signed the petition.

**The Chair:** We have run out of time, unless there's something we're ready to decide today. Would our clerks be available for a subsequent meeting on this topic so we could continue the conversation? Particularly on the second item, the petitions, I have a feeling colleagues certainly would want to ask more questions. I don't know whether colleagues are ready to decide on the first item now; that's up to you.

Mr. Hill, you have the floor.

**Mr. Jay Hill:** I propose or move—I think Judi is willing to do it as well—that we give them the green light to proceed with the notices portion. I think we all need to give a little more thought to what we're getting ourselves into with this second part on the petitions.

• (1230)

**Hon. Judi Longfield:** I second that.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

[*English*]

There's a motion on the floor. Would you like to speak to it?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I agree.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Is everyone in favour of approving the clerk's suggestion for the electronic filing of motions?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** We'll instruct our staff to prepare the necessary report to table in the House of Commons. We'll defer on the second one until the subsequent meeting.

We'll now move in camera so we can discuss another item involving agenda. We'll try to do it in five minutes.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

[*Public proceedings resume*]

• (1235)

**The Chair:** Okay, we're in public now.

The motion for this—or whatever else you decide—is that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs requests an operational budget of \$24,000 for its study on electoral reform—so it's only electoral reform—and that the chair present the said budget to the Liaison Committee.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** If there's no other item, does someone move the adjournment?

Mr. Hill so moves.

The meeting is adjourned.







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