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—
Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1110)

[Translation]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mrs. Angela Crandall): I see that there is a quorum.

[English]

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. I'm ready to receive motions to that effect.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): I wish to nominate Mr. Sorenson for chair.

The Clerk: Are there any other nominations?

All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Mr. Sorenson is elected chair.

Is it the will of the committee to elect the vice-chairs at this moment? I'm ready to receive nominations for vice-chair.

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Bryon Wilfert.

The Clerk: Are there any other nominations? The motion is that Mr. Wilfert be elected first vice-chair for the official opposition.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Are there nominations for the second vice-chair from another party of the opposition?

Madame St-Hilaire.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): I wish to nominate Mrs. Vivian Barbot.

The Clerk: Are there any other nominations?

[English]

Everyone in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Thank you, colleagues, and again, welcome back. For some it is a welcome to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development meeting number one.

According to the orders of the day, we have elected the chair and the two vice-chairs, and certainly I would congratulate those vice-chairs. It will be good to work with you, and we welcome all of you back.

We have a number of new members, and a special welcome to Mr. Dewar and Madame St-Hilaire. Mr. Martin is back and Mr. Chan, and Mr. Lebel, I think, will be joining us here later on.

We want to continue with the routine motions. I think they have been circulated. We may want to take a look at a couple of these that may change. In the last parliament we had meeting days that were back to back, and some of the routine motions we passed originally were passed because of the back-to-back dates. So please have a look at those, and I'll just check with the clerk.

The best way perhaps is to just go through the order here, and we'll look at the first one, the subcommittee on agenda. This is the steering committee. The motion is:

That the Chair, the two Vice-Chairs, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the member from the New Democratic Party do compose the Sub-Committee on Agenda and Procedure.

It's better known as the steering committee.

Does anyone have any comment? Would someone like to move it, if there's no problem with the makeup of that committee?

Madame Barbot.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): I believe Ms. Lalonde will be sitting on the steering committee.

[English]

The Chair: This now becomes the vice-chair's position. According to this motion, Madame Barbot, you would be the person nominated to the steering committee.

Let me say that if Madame Lalonde is able to return, however you work that out within your party is acceptable. We've had cases in the past when the NDP had one member and if that member was unable to attend, they would have a representative there. So that would be acceptable.

Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Are we talking about the subcommittee on agenda and procedure?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Wajid Khan: I propose we add more members to make it more productive, a second member from the Liberals and two from the government.

The Chair: Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: These are well-established routine motions, hence the word “routine” in front of them. I don't think there's any need actually, with all due respect to Mr. Khan, to change what we have here. It has worked well for many, many years. Every party is represented and everybody has a say. It's worked very collegially and in a consensual way.

As the previous chair of the committee, you operated in that way, Mr. Sorenson. I think all of us on the opposition, as well as in the government, were all treated very fairly and it worked quite well. So I would submit that. Why upset the apple cart?

The Chair: To make it clear, although these are routine motions, these are also motions we want to put in place that would help our committee work well together. I think they're routine because they've been used, but they are also routine in this next parliament. If we were to change it, it doesn't mean that some of these cannot be changed.

Is there anyone else on the motion of the makeup of the subcommittee?

Mr. Patry.

•(1115)

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): I just want to point out to Mr. Khan that all the decisions of the steering committee need to be ratified by the main committee. That means it doesn't change anything if you're there or not. It's the main committee that's the boss.

Mr. Wajid Khan: I didn't follow that. Could you say that again, please?

Mr. Bernard Patry: All the decisions of the steering committee need to be ratified by the main committee. At that time it doesn't change anything.

The Chair: Are we in favour then of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one deals with the research officers:

That the Committee retain the services of one or more analysts from the Parliamentary Information and Research Service of the Library of Parliament....

I think that's also agreed.

(Motion agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Then we will invite them to the table. We have Mr. Lee and....

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: We're going to have to wait to learn how to pronounce your last name, Ms. Mychajlyszyn. How is it? We sometimes may end up calling you Natalie. When Borys is here, we call Borys “Borys”.

Gerry Schmitz will be back. Gerry is on a mission somewhere around the world for us, doing his work.

Welcome back. I can tell you, from all parties, that we appreciate the work of the Library of Parliament and our researchers here.

The third motion is the quorum for receiving evidence:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present provided that at least three (3) members are present, including a member of the opposition.

Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know that what's happened previously is that because of other meetings, etc., we've left witnesses waiting. Is there any way to suggest that after 15 minutes—we have scheduled meetings—we'd be able to hear witnesses, regardless of whether there's a member of the opposition or a member of the government present to hear testimony?

I'm not suggesting moving forward on motions or anything, but just to get the meeting started, out of respect for the witnesses we have coming in.

The Chair: The meeting would be called to order by whom?

Mr. Dean Allison: By the chair; I'm assuming the chair would be here. We'd be required to start the meeting after 15 minutes.

The Chair: Even without quorum, if it's only to hear witnesses?

Mr. Dean Allison: I would still suggest that we have at least three. I realize that it does state to make sure there's one member of the government and one member of the opposition.

The Chair: All right, that's....

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Sorry, can you clarify what the difference is, Dean? Thank you.

Mr. Dean Allison: No, that's when we're outside the parliamentary precinct, when we're on the road hearing witnesses.

I know that in our HR committee we had some concerns when we were hearing witnesses. People were late coming in, etc., so we held our witnesses up and we weren't able to hear witnesses, even though people did show up after the meetings got started. It put us behind considerably, as we were trying to hear witnesses.

The Chair: So you're saying everything would still be recorded in the blues and it would be in the committee....

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: I would argue, Mr. Chair, that we keep the status quo. It's important that at least one member of an opposition party be there. This is there for a reason. It's an issue of fairness and representation. If we as a group cannot muster one person, then you deserve to hammer us mercilessly.

So I think it should be the status quo.

The Chair: Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: It all depends. I agree with Mr. Allison in the sense that if you're travelling, depending on where it is, you could split the committee into two or three, with some out west, some in central Canada, some in the eastern provinces. If we're just two or three, and sometimes we're just two, you maybe have five or ten witnesses over there. So it all depends.

This motion is for Ottawa hearings. In Ottawa hearings we need to be three. I think it's important. When we say "be authorized to hold meetings", it's meetings for witnesses, not for any other meetings. It's just for witnesses. For witnesses we can be three minimum, but if it's for voting, it doesn't mean we can vote. We need to get a quorum to vote anything else.

So it's just to hold witness meetings.

• (1120)

The Chair: I'm wondering, Mr. Patry, since you served as chair of this committee for so long, if we were involved in a case like that where we were travelling, and we perhaps had a split committee, would it be possible, if we knew that there may be a problem...? Let's say all of a sudden some people had to go home for something. Could we at that point in time ask for permission to go against this motion?

I mean, if this is for here, then that's acceptable. But if during travel we all of a sudden don't have someone from the opposition....

This is a good point. If we split up, we may only have two opposition members. We've had it in the past where a member from the NDP had to go home for a funeral—I remember that one—and all of a sudden we were left very short. So Mr. Allison has a good point.

You know what? I think we'd probably cross that bridge at that time, when we got to it. This committee usually has a really good working relationship. I've been on other committees, and we've always tried to have this committee operate, in cases like that, with not necessarily consensus but with an attempt to accommodate in that type of case, when we got to it.

I just think that's something to be aware of.

Mr. Dean Allison: Once again, my suggestion is just to add that if we're outside the parliamentary precinct, we would only be required to wait 15 minutes before receiving evidence.

I'll just state again my example of being in Montreal, where one of our members on the Conservative side was flying in or taking a train in, and they were late. We were forced to wait, and we were late all day for hearing witnesses.

The Chair: I have been there too. I don't know what happened in Montreal, but all of a sudden, to be quite honest, I was embarrassed by the turnout of the committee. I can't remember what the issue was, but it was foreign affairs. I think it ended up being one opposition member and maybe only one from the government. That was a couple of parliaments ago.

Would we be open to that addition, then, on that motion?

Mr. Bernard Patry: The addition of what?

The Chair: Mr. Allison, go ahead.

Mr. Dean Allison: Just that any meetings taking place outside the parliamentary precinct would require the committee to wait only 15 minutes before being able to hear witnesses.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Which means that we can hear witnesses with two people. That's fine, I agree.

The Chair: Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, the current wording does not state that. It should be worded in a way that specifies that when we are away, meetings should be allowed with fewer committee members.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's what we would add to this here. Mr. Allison's suggestion is that we would add that when we're outside and travelling, and witnesses come to meet with us but some of us have maybe gone home or whatever, we could still start, after waiting 15 minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Fifteen minutes is mentioned but not the number of committee members in attendance. The purpose is to ensure that if we are away, the meeting can begin after 15 minutes regardless of how many committee members are in attendance.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, right. That's in travel, being away from here, if the need came up.

You know, for all parties, for Parliament, it's an embarrassment when witnesses come, they're ready, we don't show up—and there may be real and legitimate reasons for it—and the witnesses can't present. This would at least give them the opportunity.

So I think that's a good point, Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'm just trying to follow the logic here, Chair. You were saying that in a previous parliament, when you were travelling with a committee, only two people showed up and it was embarrassing, and I grant you that. I'm not sure this deals with that. This is actually saying you'd go ahead with that kind of quorum.

I appreciate Mr. Allison's point of view. You're not on this committee? I'm just trying to figure out what we're dealing with here. Maybe we should stick to the rules we have. At some point we can come back to them if there is a scenario where we have that concern.

I think if this has worked well.... I go back to Mr. Martin's view, that these are routine measures that have been used before. They've worked well. I go back to the axiom of "if it ain't broke...". So I'm suggesting maybe we stick with this for now, and I appreciate Mr. Allison's experience on the other committee, but if it hasn't been a problem with this committee, let's just stick with what we have and move on.

•(1125)

The Chair: I have an amendment moved to that, so we'll continue to speak to that.

Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan: I'd ask when we're going to have an amendment and move on that.

The Chair: He read his amendment into the motion. Did you want to speak to that then?

Mr. Wajid Khan: I want to respond to Mr. Dewar. The examples given here before are that it didn't work well in the past. The witnesses had to wait; therefore we don't need to wait longer than 15 minutes, and I think that's quite reasonable.

The Chair: Madam Barbot.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: When there is a meeting, in principle everyone should be there. Otherwise we have individuals waiting. It makes sense that the meeting be able to begin. I do not know why we would have to make this a rule at this point in time. It is the responsibility of each member to attend when a meeting is called. When witnesses are invited a meeting is held. I understand the terms but I do not understand the purpose.

[English]

The Chair: The problem, as explained by the clerk to me, is that according to procedure, after 15 minutes, if you don't have a quorum, the meeting is cancelled. That can be a problem in travel, especially when you're travelling around the country. It's 15 minutes, and then you tell the people who've waited a month and prepared and had everything translated, the meeting is over. Or it can be postponed, if we can work that into our schedule. But this would allow them to give their presentation or at least to be on record. It may not be used. We may not use it. We may be able to say, will it work for you to postpone your meeting for an hour and we'll be there? Then it works. But if people aren't here, it gives them the opportunity.... Otherwise, as the chair, I'm tied to what tradition says, and this would be that the meeting could be cancelled.

That gives a lot of responsibility to the chair. If I don't like these witnesses, I can say, we aren't there, the meeting is cancelled. No, let's get their testimony.

Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I've had meetings in Montreal when we started out as three and I finished alone after two hours because someone had to go for the train, and we've had witnesses. Are you going to cancel? They're here in front of you.

I think the only thing we should say is that this quorum of three for receiving evidence doesn't apply while travelling. The quorum of three doesn't apply while we're travelling. At that time, within 15

minutes we can start. This quorum of three doesn't apply. That would be my solution.

The Chair: That's a friendly amendment to the amendment.

Do you want to hear the motion as amended?

Go ahead, Clerk.

The Clerk: The motion is that meetings taking place outside of the parliamentary precincts be allowed to proceed with no quorum.

Is that what the members want?

Mr. Bernard Patry: That the quorum doesn't apply to the meeting; the meeting could start 15 minutes after.

The Chair: All right. So we've got the general feel for it.

All in favour of that motion as amended?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: I'm now looking at the next one, time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses. The motion is:

That witnesses be given ten (10) minutes for their opening statement that, at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated ten (10) minutes for the first questioner of each party when a Minister appears before the Committee...and that thereafter five (5) minutes be allocated to each subsequent questioner alternating between Government and opposition parties.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): I move it, and that doesn't preclude the fact that someone who has ten minutes may share with one of his or her colleagues.

The Chair: All right. That's fairly straightforward. That's at the discretion of the chair.

As those of you who have served on this committee know, that isn't a routine proceeding. We've moved it in the past to seven minutes for the opening round—isn't that right, with the minister? No, it was ten minutes with the minister and seven minutes with someone else. That's what we've done in the past.

An hon. member: This is fine.

The Chair: Leave it this way?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: All right; it's easy.

•(1130)

Mr. Bernard Patry: We're doing it, but the chair runs it, and that's it.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I would suggest that the seven minutes will allow more to be involved and engaged. Sometimes we do run a little short on the rounds of the questioning, and that would certainly give everybody an opportunity. Surely in a seven-minute period of time you can put forward your case and your question, but it certainly would allow more of a round of questioning, particularly for some that come in under one hour and shorter time periods.

The Chair: All right. Are you proposing...?

Mr. Peter Goldring: I'm proposing a seven-minute round, followed by five.

The Chair: Okay. Are there any other comments on that?

Go ahead, Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: I think you should keep it as it is, because having the five minutes actually accomplishes what Mr. Goldring is doing, and it gives more people an opportunity to submit questions and more people around the committee table to have a chance to participate in questioning the witnesses. When we have the longer ones, fewer people therefore have an opportunity to actually ask questions. I think the way it is right now is much fairer than having the longer period of time.

Mr. Dean Allison: He's referring in the first round to seven minutes.

Hon. Keith Martin: I am too, because that ten minutes refers only to the minister. In subsequent non-ministerial meetings it's five minutes.

Mr. Dean Allison: No. Through you, Mr. Chairman, it's five minutes for each round. Isn't that right?

Hon. Keith Martin: I read here that it's ten minutes for ministers and five for any other witnesses who are non-ministers.

Mr. Dean Allison: Okay, thanks.

The Chair: The first round with the minister is ten minutes.

Mr. Goldring, were you responding?

Mr. Peter Goldring: Mr. Chairman, on the one-hour meetings that we've been having, my argument would be that it practically eliminates follow-up questioning. Seven minutes would allow more of an involvement and engagement for secondary and follow-up questioning.

The Chair: That works if you do a split. Your point is correct in a split.

He's right. There is only one round in a one-hour meeting. You get one round, so in the seven minutes there, usually the Liberal Party will say they'll split among two or three people. We were doing that.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I don't know how many times Mr. Chair has had to cut me off when I'm up here, just about ready with that first question.

Hon. Keith Martin: We can split it anyway. We're splitting hairs here. Maybe you can settle this.

The Chair: No, that's fine.

Go ahead, Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I disagree with the seven minutes. I think ten minutes is much fairer, in the sense that if you get seven minutes, you cannot split, because if you split, you're going to get seven minutes of questions and no answers. That's what happened with the minister. The minister at that time could lapse a long time, and there'll be no follow-up. If you get ten minutes, they split their questions, and you get one round by—

The Chair: I think what Mr. Goldring is saying is that the ten minutes for the minister would stay, but for all other witnesses it would be seven minutes.

Mr. Bernard Patry: We want to change ten for seven minutes, but it's.... Your motion is—

The Chair: Do you mean you want ten for seven? You're saying that the five becomes seven and the ten remains the same—

Mr. Peter Goldring: No, no, no. The ten becomes seven for the questioning of witnesses—

The Chair: Oh, okay. Yes, okay, you're right—

Mr. Peter Goldring: —and the five remains five.

The Chair: I stand corrected.

All right. Are we ready for the vote?

Mr. Bernard Patry: Make it for ten minutes. You're voting on what, now?

The Chair: There was no amendment moved.

All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We will go with the status quo. That's good.

I want to thank the government side for giving us something to think about today with each one of these.

Now we have the fourth one, on witness expenses:

That, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation, and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses not exceeding....

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

The Chair: Distribution of documents:

That the Clerk of the Committee....

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

The Chair: Purchase of documents:

It was agreed—That the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to purchase documents for its use.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Working meals:

That the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the Committee and its Subcommittees.

Because we meet from eleven until one, this is going to apply more. I'm glad I didn't put this on the front, as the first one we dealt with, because people might say you can tell what I'm interested in.

On this one, I would just like your input. Would you want meals, a light lunch, for all our committee meetings held from eleven until one? They then become working lunches. I have talked to other committee chairs and some have said yes.

As you remember, last year, I think it was Norman Doyle's committee—immigration—that met from eleven until one, and they always had some kind of a lunch so that at one o'clock members didn't have to run and get something.

I think it's the first time I can remember that our committee has been given that slot.

An hon. member: How does it affect your budget?

The Chair: How does it affect whose budget? It comes out of our operating budget, which we have already said we would pass.

● (1135)

Hon. Keith Martin: Does it compromise your ability to work?

The Chair: No, I don't think so.

It is a good point. To me, when you invite guests in, it doesn't look as good when you've got 17 hungry members of Parliament chowing down while listening to witnesses. So I think you have to work out those details, but it is through the lunch hour.

Do we want that, a working lunch? They can eat as well.

All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: In camera meetings.

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: I just have an amendment to the in camera meetings motion.

The Chair: In camera meetings:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each Committee member be allowed to have one staff person present at in camera meetings.

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: I have a friendly amendment, Mr. Chair. After "to have one staff person", I would add "and each party one additional person present at in camera meetings". This enables each party to have another person if they want someone from their research department or their whip's office to be there, and it allocates that one person from each party would be there.

The Chair: Madam Barbot.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: That is interesting. Sometimes we need to be accompanied, for whatever reason. This allows us to count on that person.

[English]

The Chair: The difficulty is sometimes in.... I guess that's just up to the chair to make sure that it's all in order. I know in the past we've had to ask people to leave because there were two or three extra from a party. That would be all parties.

Are we in favour of the amendment to allow one more per party?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: In camera transcript:

That one copy of the transcript of all in camera meetings be kept in the Committee Clerk's office....

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

The Chair: Gifts for foreign delegations.

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

The Chair: Notice requirements:

That, except for amendments to bills, twenty-four (24) hours' notice be given before any substantive motion is considered by the Committee....

Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison: Once again, I think in light of what happens in other committees and the fact that you will be meeting on Tuesdays and Thursdays, it should be 48 hours, which is standard procedure across all committees. That would be my recommendation.

The Chair: This 24 hours, if you remember, was put in place because we were meeting on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. On occasion we were meeting on two days back to back. So this 24 hours was changed from the routine proceedings to allow motions in 24 hours. This basically gives them the 48 hours.

Are we all in favour of going back? If all of a sudden we get a timeline of Tuesday-Wednesday again or Wednesday-Thursday, then we'll come back and re-address this.

Are we all in favour of having that at 48 hours?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: All right.

Deferral of consideration....

Yes, Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: If I might make a comment, perhaps we should have a prioritizing of legislation. If we do have government or private members' bills, could they be somehow worked in here to have a priority over non-legislative examinations? Then we can move private members' bills and government legislation and give those priority in meetings. Is that possible?

The Chair: It's my understanding that government bills—anything that's referred from Parliament—has precedence over an individual study, regardless. In fact some of the private members' bills have a timeline in which they have to be dealt with. Those would then become the priority.

● (1140)

Mr. Peter Goldring: Through the last session the concern was that we had government bills, but we also had the non-legislative studies on Haiti and democracy development. I want to be sure that the government bills, government legislation, and private members' bills would be given priority should those two conflict in any way.

The Chair: All right. That's noted, and I think that is taken care of here.

Next we have deferral of consideration:

That for motions requiring (48) hours notice, the Chair be authorized to defer consideration until 15 minutes prior to the adjournment....

Do you agree with that?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Regarding these motions, I want to clarify something that I spoke to the clerk about just before our meeting began. It came up in another committee this morning that was going through the same things. Please, if you can, submit your motions in both official languages. The motion is not finished when you give it to the clerk. If the clerk has to then take it to translation and she doesn't get it back for a day, all of a sudden...the 48 hours doesn't begin until it's back from translation. So for any political party, if you want to have a motion, it certainly does speed things up if it is submitted to the clerk in both official languages. Otherwise, the clock does not begin ticking until it comes back from translation and the members receive it. You can say, well, we phoned it in and I got it to the clerk at... Well, wait, it came in one language, it had to be translated, and it didn't get out in time because of that.

This is a heads-up to all members. We all have to be aware of that.

All right. Creation of...

Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Perhaps we should have consideration for the possible abandonment of motions should they not be dealt with in a certain number of meetings and find some way to remove them from the list. Is there a possibility of a mechanism for removing motions?

The Chair: If you remember, we dealt with this in the last parliament because we had so many motions there that we even forgot about them. Well, the clerk didn't forget about them. But sometimes they would come up and then all of a sudden members would say, "Well, we want that motion that's been on there for two months", and we weren't really prepared for it.

Are you making that a motion?

Mr. Peter Goldring: I suppose I will make it a motion that it be dealt with by the committee within two meetings of their first being listed on the agenda, and failing that, the motion should be deemed abandoned by the mover and shall be dispensed with and no longer be subject to committee consideration, which would leave it open if somebody wanted to resubmit a new motion to that effect.

The Chair: Okay. I'm going to go to Madame Barbot, Mr. Patry, and Mr. Dewar.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, I think that once a motion has been tabled it should be kept right up until it is dealt with. We cannot just decide that it does not exist simply because we did not have time to deal with it, or because of any other reason.

[*English*]

The Chair: In the past, if I brought forward a motion, it would be on the books and I could bring it forward at a meeting. Sometimes, however, we can cut our committee business short, and in cases like that it might be a difficulty.

Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I don't think it's feasible, Peter. You have 15 minutes each time we meet. You've got two meetings a week, that's 30 minutes, and you might have 12 motions. I mean, we have problems all the time dealing with one motion in 15 minutes. At the time it happens it might not be the problem of the members who pass

a motion, because there's no time. At that time we just cannot delete any motions. I really feel the motions should be there.

Now, it's up to the standing committee. If one day they want to have a meeting of just the motions, they could have a two-hour meeting with just the motions. It's up to the standing committee to come back and say we've got so many motions and we're going to deal with them in two hours on one day. But in 15 minutes? If you have five motions, you're not going to pass through one, even in two days.

The Chair: Mr. Dewar.

• (1145)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Just for the record, I wasn't really keen on changing the 48. I think we should keep it as it is. I think it has the potential to take away from committee members the ability to have their issues on the agenda, so to speak, particularly if we use words like "abandonment". Notwithstanding, we can still submit the motions.

I'm concerned that we're trying to put too many controls on things here. In fact, that's the job of the steering committee. If there are concerns about too much on the agenda, that's something they should be dealing with, to help clean up, if possible. I think we should keep it as it is.

The Chair: I want to be very clear about this because I want to be certain that I do this correctly from the chair. If the government, for example, and we'll pick on the government, were to submit six motions—and they are always in order of precedence—and all of a sudden you have a motion that you've submitted, it might be the fifth one we deal with, and if you aren't bringing forward your motion and the government isn't going to bring forward their motion, they can then just sit. All of a sudden, we could talk out the 15 minutes on our motion because it's in first.

In my opinion, motions are there to deal with something fairly quickly because of timelines. It's very easy, when we have a regulation like this...motions always end up on the paper, on the agenda, and you deal with them in priority.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's right, a short period of time to do that.

The Chair: If the government gets eight motions in first, we may never get a motion from the opposition.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I understand.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Let me give you an example. A member could travel with a minister, be away for a full week travelling, and when he comes back there will no longer be any of his motions. That's what happens.

We'll leave it like it is right now and we'll see. It's always worked like this. The problem is, we cannot simply abandon, delete, or remove a motion of a member. I think it's a privilege for members to put a motion, and we cannot simply withdraw any of these motions because, for example, I don't like Mr. Allison's motion and he's not here today, so bump it. No. It's the privilege of the members to have motions.

The Chair: Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison: To clarify my thoughts, I appreciate Madam Barbot's concern about not having time to get to the motions. My thought was that if these were motions that were arbitrarily thrown on to the order of precedence and were not dealt with, or were not asked to be dealt with, they should be removed after two meetings if someone hasn't said, listen, we haven't been able to get to my motion and I would still like to get to it next week. I thought of this, as opposed to arbitrarily filling up the paper with all kinds of motions.

Once again, in my experience in HR, we had 30 motions that no one was talking about, yet we always had to bring them forward every week. This is not to say that people can't bring them back. This is not to say that if someone is going to be away they couldn't say, "I'm not going to be here next week to deal with it, but I'd like it to remain on." This is dealing with motions that clearly are set there that the committee has no intention of dealing with at the present time. That would be my thought, just to balance that off.

The Chair: I think from the opposition's point of view you should think about this, because even to say that they have to stay in the precedence in which they were submitted, I think you're defeating the point of a motion. If I'm simply going to sit with a motion here that I'm not going to bring forward for a long time, but we have to deal with it before we deal with this one from the opposition that is timely, it can tie your hands in some way.

So shall we leave it as is or what?

Mr. Bernard Patry: We'll take the risk that the government side is always going to be nice with us—no problem—and we're going to take that risk.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Maybe the language of "abandonment" isn't the right way to put it, but certainly the indication is to perhaps have some form of sunseting to it so that when they do accumulate and there are too many of them there is a way of addressing it. Maybe not two meetings, but a specific period of time that will apply to them all so that you can start it over again.

•(1150)

The Chair: This may be something we can refer to the subcommittee if we see it is going to be a problem. We dealt with this during the last parliament because it was an issue.

Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: If we're dealing with it after two or three weeks, the clerk could send a note to that member to see whether he wants to keep it on the order paper. If the member says he wants it or he doesn't want it, then you could deal with it at that time.

The Chair: I don't think Mr. Goldring really made an amendment. All in favour of the way it is...? We have already passed that, haven't we? That was something totally new?

Is that something we want to vote on or not?

A voice: Sure.

The Chair: Then let's hear the motion.

Mr. Peter Goldring: We'll leave "abandonment" out:

That all motions shall be dealt with by the Committee within two weeks of the first meeting of being listed on the agenda as Committee business, failing which

the motion shall be deemed withdrawn by the mover and shall be dispensed with and may no longer be subject to the Committee's consideration.

The Chair: The last part would almost mean that you can't resubmit it.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Let's say "shall be abandoned by the mover and shall be dispensed with".

Mr. Bernard Patry: What happens if the mover doesn't want to abandon it?

An hon. member: It said "shall be deemed".

The Chair: Okay. All in favour of Mr. Goldring's motion?

(Motion negated)

Hon. Keith Martin: Can we go to the main motion?

The Chair: That was a motion on its own.

The last one is the creation of a subcommittee on human rights and international development.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, maybe my perception is incorrect, but I had a great deal of difficulty in the last session with regard to the subcommittee. The reasons are that none of us are on it and there was no liaison between the subcommittee and us. The difficulty was that they were doing things and suddenly we got calls on issues we were not aware of. It says that these are associate members of the committee. I would prefer that some member of this committee be on the subcommittee.

The Chair: I was on the subcommittee and Madame St-Hilaire was on the subcommittee.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: But she wasn't here. The problem was that information suddenly appeared that members were not cognizant of. They were operating in their own world. We need to have better liaison, whether that is by the chairman or a colleague. I have no difficulty if it's one of our colleagues on that subcommittee, but there needs to be some continuity and awareness of what is happening.

Sometimes they were dealing with, shall I say, fairly explosive issues, which we clearly were not cognizant of. I would be more than happy to suggest what some of them were. The subcommittee often deals with very touchy issues, such as—let's put it on the table—the comfort women issue. That was one good example. We had a subcommittee report on China and human rights. That would be another. Quite frankly, as a member of the standing committee, I was broadsided.

I really believe we should have a colleague—and not necessarily the chairman, because he has enough to do—on this committee. If members are agreeable, I am more than happy to nominate somebody. I think that would be appropriate.

The Chair: There are so many groups and organizations that wish to appear before our committee, it becomes almost impossible to operate within the parameters of what we are wanting to study. So where we had an issue dealing with human rights or international development, we had this subcommittee—

•(1155)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I don't have a problem with the subcommittee, but I just want there to be physically someone from this committee to be chairing it, and then we can always have them account here. I don't have a problem with the subcommittee; that's not the issue. It's just having somebody physically being the chair.

The Chair: I think this would be the first time a standing committee would say, we will name the chair; we will do this. That's always been done in consultation with the whips. It's something they have worked out—who would chair, who would vice-chair, who would do the different things on the subcommittee. So now you're going—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I just think that from an operational standpoint it would make it much easier.

The Chair: I think there may be other ways to do this—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I'm open to suggestions.

The Chair:—and that would be that we would allow our steering committee to meet with the steering committee of the subcommittee and to sit down.... The chair would be here and we would say, you're on the steering committee of human rights and international development; you're a subcommittee of ours.

It's our responsibility to know, yes.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I just think it's cleaner if we nominate someone from this committee. I realize there may be, but because there have been problems in the past, I think it's a cleaner way to go. But I'm open to suggestions.

The Chair: I know that for your party, for example, Mr. Cotler and Mr. Silva serve on that. Neither of them are on this committee.

I was on that committee, as was Madame St-Hilaire. They were very focused on what they wanted to study as well, and I would assume that a subcommittee member would be in consultation with whomever is the vice-chair or whomever is their party representation on the standing committee. That's what we expect, I think.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I wasn't the vice-chair, but—

The Chair: I'm not certain I would want to get into saying that government has the chair position of a subcommittee and this is our nominee and—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: What I'm suggesting is that the communications need to be better—

The Chair: I agree.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: If that to me could be the approach—any member, I don't have a difficulty with whomever the member is, but I think in terms of the communications, that's what we need to address. If my suggestion is agreeable, then do it that way. If there is another way, then....

The Chair: Okay.

We'll go to Mr. Khan, Mr. Allison, Mr. Martin, and Madame St-Hilaire.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We had several members of this committee on the human rights subcommittee, and we discussed China, Cuba, and Iran. I really don't know what my colleague is referring to, but I think, as you stated, it

is the responsibility of the party representatives to communicate with the parties. If they want to quote somebody on the subcommittee who is also on this committee, I think that's a decision made by the whips or the party itself. It's not up to us to decide who should be the chair of the subcommittee.

The Chair: Okay. Without my input on that one, Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison: I agree with what Mr. Wilfert is saying, that there should be some continuity. I think what happens with a lot of subcommittees is that the main committee, which is actually responsible for it, never gets the information.

I don't think Bryon really cares who's on the committee, as long as there is some mechanism for talking back to this committee, and I think that's the point he wants to make.

So maybe not the chair, or whoever, but I think there should be some way, if our members are on it, where they can come back and be able to report, even at a high level, as to what is going on so that the committee is aware.

The Chair: We have to improve communication, undoubtedly. I don't think there is any whip who would be willing to say that the whips have no responsibility as to who sits on that committee. Mr. Cotler is on it, Mr. Silva is on it, Mr. Wilfert is on it, and they're put there by the party.

Mr. Martin, and then Madame St-Hilaire.

Hon. Keith Martin: Maybe the way to accomplish this—and I agree with Mr. Wilfert—would be to add this to the end of the motion, and it would read, “and that the Chair of the Subcommittee meet with the Steering Committee of the Foreign Affairs Committee at their mutual discretion”.

The Chair: I think that's good.

Hon. Keith Martin: In that way you're actually formalizing it here, but you're leaving it to the discretion of both groups to be able to meet when they see fit to make sure that communications improve.

Does that sound reasonable?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: It's the communications part that I'm—

The Chair: Yes, I think that's a good addition. Maybe I'll just have the clerk read it out. She's faster.

Do you have it there?

Hon. Keith Martin: At the end, where it says, “stands adjourned”, we would add “and the Chair of the Subcommittee meet with the Steering Committee of the Foreign Affairs Committee at their mutual discretion”.

•(1200)

The Chair: Good. All in favour?

Oh, yes, Madame St-Hilaire.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Chairman, I would like to remind my colleagues of something.

When I sat on the Subcommittee on Human Rights, we became very frustrated over a report on China. The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs had decided to delay it. This situation created frustration. I also remember that at the time, the subcommittee members stated that they wanted to become an independent committee. The future members of that subcommittee might want to make that request. I personally would support it.

Even though you did not give me the floor, I must point out that your idea of having both steering committees meet is very interesting. I think that there is a communication problem. The Subcommittee on Human Rights should not be dependent. It has to be given a certain amount of independence. Otherwise the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs might as well do all the work. As you stated so well earlier on, you would not be able to. That is why the subcommittee was created in the first place.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame St-Hilaire. It was well worth the wait. We appreciate your input on that.

I agree, especially when you're dealing with human rights. We base reports at that subcommittee on the testimony we hear. So thank you.

Are we all in favour of the amendment to the motion as amended?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: We want to welcome Mr. Lebel. He will be on our committee. He had an appointment earlier this morning.

Welcome to our committee. We look forward to working with you.

Because we want to look for witnesses as soon as possible, may I make a suggestion that we ask our steering committee to meet on the Thursday that the committee should be meeting, and to quickly organize so that they can provide witnesses, or whatever the study might be for the following week? Can you make that steering committee this coming Thursday eleven to one o'clock?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Will we get a notice from the clerk?

The Chair: Yes.

There will be a meeting of the steering committee on Thursday from eleven to one o'clock.

The meeting is adjourned.

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