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Monday, February 2, 2009

—
Chair

Mr. Gary Schellenberger

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• (1535)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Richard Rumas): Honourable members, I see a quorum.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(1), we will proceed to the election of the chair. I am ready to receive motions to that effect.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): I would like to nominate Gary Schellenberger as the honourable chair. It is my utmost honour to do so.

The Clerk: It is moved by Mr. Simms that Mr. Schellenberger be elected chair of the committee. Are there other nominations?

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): I'd like to propose that we close nominations.

The Clerk: Thank you.

Is the committee ready to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: We now proceed, pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), to the election of two vice-chairs, one of which will come from the official opposition and one from the other opposition parties.

Madame Lavallée.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): I would like to nominate Scott Simms for the position of first vice-chair.

The Clerk: Are there any other nominations?

The motion is that Scott Simms be elected first vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Clerk: The second vice-chair is a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition. Nominations?

It is moved by Monsieur Rodriguez that Madame Lavallée be elected as the second vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Having done that, I will now ask the elected chair, Mr. Schellenberger, to take the chair.

An hon. member: Welcome back, Mr. Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)): Thank you very much.

I must say that I've been in a lot of elections, it seems, since 2003. I've sat on this committee since 2003, when I came here. Thank you very much for the confidence that you see in me. Either it's confidence or I'm easy; I don't know what it is. Again, thank you very much for the support. I hope that as we go forward in this 40th Parliament we can definitely make everyone proud of this committee. I think it's a very important committee. We will go forward on that.

I also thank my vice-chairs for their election.

Now we move to routine motions. As we go through this, while we have some general ways, I'm going to go down the routine motions that we've adopted in this heritage committee over the last number of years. If you want me to go back to what the general routine motions are too, I can do that. What I look forward to here is that this is what we've done before.

As I read the motions, I guess I'll need a mover.

Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Just before you get to that, Mr. Chair, I was wondering if, with the indulgence of the committee, I might be able to move a motion for adoption by the committee at this point, prior to getting into routine proceedings. I'd need unanimous consent to read the motion in, because obviously I haven't given any notice of it.

The Chair: There's no formal notice requirement yet.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Oh, we don't have a requirement yet? What I would like to put forward is that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage welcome the Honourable James Moore, as the new Minister of Canadian Heritage, to speak to committee members on February 9, to introduce himself to the committee, to share with the committee the work he has undertaken since becoming Minister of Canadian Heritage, and to discuss the future business of the committee. That would be next Monday, Mr. Chair, if it's agreeable to the members of the committee.

The Chair: We'll hear from Madame Lavallée first and then Ms. Dhalla.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Congratulations on your election, Mr. Chair. I think we will all find an interesting way of working together.

You announced that we have some routine motions to attend to. It's quite normal for this to be our first item of business. With all due respect to Mr. Del Mastro who made an excellent suggestion regarding the work plan, I'd like us to deal with the routine motions first and agree on procedure before moving on to the work plan.

I'm not sure where we stand on procedure, but I'm prepared to move a motion, if necessary.

[English]

The Chair: It seems we don't have unanimous consent to go to the motion at this particular time. We'll do our routine motions and then we can deal with your motion.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Do we need unanimous consent at this point?

The Chair: Do we need unanimous consent to discuss the motion?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: We haven't adopted routine motions yet, so I guess we don't need unanimous consent.

The Chair: Ms. Dhalla was first, and then Mr. Bruinooge.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): I think it is an excellent idea to have the minister come before the committee. There are a number of issues that committee members would like to discuss with regard to some of the cuts that have been taking place, and I hope this meeting, which I would see, based on what you said, as an introductory meeting, would not prevent the minister from coming again to discuss the cuts.

Perhaps what Ms. Lavallée is saying—to go through the proposed agenda and finalize what we would like to do with the committee—would be in the best interests of the committee. If the motion were presented at that time, we could perhaps have the minister come once to discuss all of the issues that need to be addressed by the committee instead of having the minister come twice.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to introduce Niki Ashton, who will be taking my place when I'm not here. I'll be stepping down for her at times. She's not in a voting capacity when I'm here, and vice versa.

I appreciate the desire to get this business under way as quickly as possible. I feel that we need to set up the committees. We need to have discussions. It is certainly something we want to get to, but I'd be concerned about jumping ahead of that before we actually had a chance to have a general discussion on some of the areas we want to go to. I'm not opposing the motion, but I think we need to deal with general business first, and then we can put it in the mix.

The Chair: We'll just set that aside right now and get to routine motions.

Number one is on the services of analysts from the Library of Parliament: that the committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist in its work.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I have a question, Mr. Chair. We have received two documents. How are the two different?

[English]

The Chair: One is general routine motions, but the one I'm reading from and trying to adopt is the one we've used here, which says "Routine motions...Canadian Heritage". That's what we've used in this particular committee. That is the one we are looking at, if you want to cross-reference it with the other one. So far we have adopted number one.

Number two is on committee business, the subcommittee on agenda and procedure: that all matters related to the committee's business agenda and procedure be taken up in the committee of the whole.

That's what we have usually done here. We've met as a committee of the whole for those parts of the agenda and procedure.

Can I have someone move that?

It's moved by Mr. Angus.

Yes, Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: I'd like to propose an amendment to this particular item. I will just read out the proposed motion.

The Chair: Okay, it's moved by Mr. Angus. Now we can talk about a subamendment by Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I believe the proposal of routine motions is before everyone. I'm going to read the second item here of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be composed of the chair, the parliamentary secretary, a member from the government, and a member from each of the opposition parties; that quorum on the subcommittee shall consist of at least three members, one of whom must be from the government, and one member of the opposition. Each member of the subcommittee shall be permitted to have one assistant attend at any of the meetings of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure.

• (1545)

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: The interpreter does not have the text and therefore, cannot translate for us.

[English]

The Chair: Order.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Chair, the reason I'm putting forward this particular amendment is to in part allow the parliamentary secretary to be a specific member of the subcommittee, as well as to allow for a member from each party to be representative on the subcommittee as well. If you'd like, I could pass along this text to you, but essentially the main criterion I'm suggesting is to add the parliamentary secretary to this particular section in relation to the subcommittee.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Mr. Chair, I do not have the text. I did not receive the translation because the translator did not have the document.

[*English*]

The Chair: We would have to have the translation.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: What Madam Lavallée is suggesting is that if we want to propose any amendments to these routine procedures, essentially we need to have them translated. In the event that that's the case, I think we'll need more time and we'll have to come back.

The Chair: We're getting off to a kind of rocky start here, for some reason, and we're not going to have that in this committee. Let's get this down here.

Our committee business is the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. At this particular committee we have not used subcommittees. Is that correct? We haven't used subcommittees. The thing that has happened with subcommittees is that so many times we've found that if there is a subcommittee, someone goes out and puts things together, and then we come back in and meet again and rehash the whole thing all over again. I think what we have here is that if we talk about this and we talk about the committee's business, the parliamentary secretary is involved because we're all involved. Am I wrong?

Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I agree with you. I think we should discuss it when we're all together in the room. Every time we had subcommittees, we would make decisions and come back and discuss the decisions again. To be more efficient, I would keep it as is.

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Chair, having sat on a number of committees in the last Parliament, I would say the heritage committee was probably one of the few that were continually functional. So I would be certainly be suspicious of changing the standing rules of a functional committee.

I don't think we need to go to subcommittee, because one of the really interesting things we established on this one is that when there was a whole series of issues that had to be planned, we would instruct our clerk to go with you, as the chair, and look at the calendar and come back and bring a proposal. That actually spared a lot of time, and it spared a lot of potential partisan animosity.

So if we can get on with the voting, I'd just say to vote no. That's how I'm voting. I don't think I'd rather discuss it much longer, because we have six other issues plus all our other issues, and I don't know how many other surprise amendments are coming forward.

So I would like to get down to the voting.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Chair, having been on other committees, I think the subcommittee functioned quite well. But I'll withdraw my amendment if it seems that's the will of the committee.

The Chair: Mr. Bruinooge has withdrawn his amendment.

Then we go back to Mr. Angus' motion on committee business, the subcommittee on agenda and procedure, that all matters related to the Committee's business agenda and procedure be taken up in the committee of the whole.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Number 3, reduced quorum, is that the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present, provided that at least three members are present, including a member of the opposition.

Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chair

On this particular point—

The Chair: You move this motion.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Okay. I'd like to move it and then I'd like to speak to it, if I could.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you.

On this particular point, I'd just like to move that we increase the number to four members and request that one member from each recognized party be present.

So in other words, it's not just a single member of the opposition and not just three members. We feel it's only appropriate if all parties are represented at the committee.

The Chair: Ms. Lavallée.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Mr. Chair, we have already seen this happen in other committees and it would mean that Conservative Party members could automatically get up from the table, leave and paralyze our committee. For that reason, I agree with the wording of this motion and I will be supporting it. I wouldn't want to make it mandatory that we have a representative of the Conservative Party.

● (1550)

[*English*]

The Chair: I think it was a suggestion. I don't think I heard an amendment, necessarily.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I would like to propose it as an amendment: that each party have at least one representative there for quorum.

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I don't have a problem with that because we can't have the meeting without the chair. If Madam Lavallée is concerned that the Conservatives wouldn't show up, you're the chair, so you're there, and we can't hold a meeting without you. I don't think we can hold it with three members without the chair. As long as the chair is there and there's a member from each party, I—

An hon. member: Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I was co-chair on a couple of committees. When the chair wasn't there, I chaired the meeting. It doesn't have to be the chair who's there.

The Chair: I think I've missed only one meeting when I haven't been chair, but someone has to fill in. I can remember back to when I was first on this committee and a meeting was hastily called. I found that I was the only opposition member at that particular meeting, and wouldn't you know it, at that particular time everyone on the other side for the government was a substitute, except for one. The business that was supposed to be done that day didn't really transpire. If I'd known what was going on, I would have got up and left, and the meeting would have been over.

In fairness to everyone, I think that when you only need to have three members here, that's.... I remember that on that day there were seven. Anyway, it's been moved by Mr. Del Mastro.

I'm sure that you can't amend your own motion. Someone else could.

Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to amend the motion first put forward by Mr. Del Mastro to alter the makeup of quorum so that there are at least four members present, including one from each of the recognized parties.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Chair, I'm deferring on this issue because I believe you have set an excellent tone of leadership on this committee. You have been at pretty much every meeting we've ever had. I'd be very surprised that we'd need to have a quick meeting without you. I think, in the interests of not making this continually partisan, it is a reasonable suggestion, because I would be very surprised, in the circumstances, that there would be a meeting you wouldn't be at, if it were a meeting with a subcommittee and then whatever quorum, because we'd end up having to bring it back to our larger committee anyway.

So I don't have a problem with this amendment.

The Chair: There's just one thing. I don't think a meeting can be called without the chair knowing of it. Am I correct? If the chair can't make it, he then designates a vice-chair to be there. As for having a meeting called by a vice-chair and put together that way without the chair knowing, I don't think that would be legal. I would hope not.

Ms. Lavallée.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I would merely like to remind my NDP colleague Mr. Angus that at some of the meetings convened in accordance with the rules, the Chair, a Conservative, decided to get up and leave, and as a result, the committee was paralyzed. I think we need to avoid a recurrence of such a situation. This motion would mean that the Chair and all of his Conservative colleagues would not be able to get up and put an end to the meeting. For that reason, I intend to vote against Mr. Bruinooge's or Mr. Del Mastro's motion. I'd like to see our committee continue sitting even if all of the Conservative members decided to walk out at the same time and in

the process, shut down the committee, as we have seen happen in the past. It's not very pleasant, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I know that this won't happen with you in the Chair, but imagine if someone takes your place.

•(1555)

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Just to put Madame Lavallée's mind at ease, Mr. Angus is correct, actually. The intent of this motion is not rooted in our not wanting quorum if there aren't any Conservatives here. Frankly, if the chair gets up and walks out, you no longer have control of the committee, because the vice-chair comes in, and we have the numbers to obstruct the committee. That's not what this is about. In fact, that doesn't matter. This isn't about obstructing the committee; it's about making sure that every party has a representative here before there's evidence. That's it. There's no sinister plot behind recommending this motion. There's nothing to it other than just making sure everybody has a person here before evidence is received. That's it.

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Not to beat a dead dog here, but I just want to reassure my colleagues. I understand what's happened in other committees, but I remember distinctly that we had an issue early in the last Parliament when a number of the Conservative Party members did not want to participate and said they were going to leave, and the chair said his job as chair was to stay here and hear evidence, and the committee went on.

So I cannot see a situation in which our chair will get up and leave to try to stop this committee. I think we need to move forward, because within this committee we have to show trust that we have a chair.... I understand the concerns, but we have set a standard in this committee for trying to find ways to work together, and I think this is a reasonable move forward.

The Chair: Okay, I'm going to call the question on the amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Angus, did you vote in support of the amendment?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes, I did.

The Chair: Now we vote on the motion as amended, which is that the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four members are present, including a member of each party.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Time limits for witnesses' statements and questioning: that witnesses be given up to 10 minutes for their opening statement; that at the discretion of the chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated five minutes for the first questioner of each party; that in the second round five minutes be allocated to the Liberals, the Bloc Québécois, and the Conservative Party; that in the third round five minutes be allocated to the Liberals, the Conservative Party, and the New Democratic Party; and if time permits, in the fourth round five minutes be allocated to the Liberals and the Conservative Party.

Ms. Lavallée.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I move that we allow seven minutes for the first round, rather than five. Everyone knows from experience that five minutes is quite short. I'm simply making a suggestion. We can discuss this subject without having a firm motion. If we see that the subject has legs, then we can move a formal motion.

[English]

The Chair: I'm going to speak to that. I don't use my gavel very much, and sometimes people go over on the first round. They might go six or seven minutes, or as much as nine minutes. I level that out. I even that out with everyone around the table. I have found that sometimes when you give somebody seven minutes, then they want to take a little bit extra. If it's going to go seven minutes, I'm going to have to use the gavel to make sure people are done. I hate interrupting people in the midst of a good question. I hate stopping a good answer coming back. I would suggest that we've had great success with the five minutes for the first time. As I say, I don't use the gavel very much. I try to be fair. When it's a good question and a good response is coming, I think if we're only going by the time limit.... I hate interjecting in these things. That's why we are probably one of the only committees that have used five minutes in that first round.

Mr. Rodriguez.

•(1600)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I agree with you. I suggest we stay with the five minutes. I'm not sure if you're supposed to say that, though.

The Chair: I'm not supposed to say that.

I need a mover. Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Does that mean I get seven minutes and you're not going to interrupt?

The Chair: It's been moved by Mr. Angus that it be as I read it for time limits for witnesses statements and questioning: that witnesses be given up to 10 minutes for their opening statement; that at the discretion of the chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated five minutes for the first questioner of each party; that in the second round five minutes be allocated to the Liberals, the Bloc Québécois, and the Conservative Party; that in the third round five minutes be allocated the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, and the New Democratic Party; and if time permits, in the fourth round five minutes be allocated to the Liberals and the Conservative Party.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Payment of witnesses, travel and living expenses: that if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation, and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses, not exceeding two representatives per organization; and that in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be at the discretion of the chair.

Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I so move.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Distribution of documents with translation: that the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents to the members of the committee only when they exist in both official languages.

Do we have a mover?

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I thought that Mr. Del Mastro was going to move the motion.

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I would just like to suggest an amendment, Mr. Chair, that the clerk shall advise all witnesses appearing before the committee of this requirement in advance. And this is not a statement on the clerk; I've worked in the past with our clerk, who does a fine job. It's just that I have been at committees where witnesses come forward and suggest that they haven't brought it in both official languages because they didn't know they had to. So I'd just like to make sure that we make sure it's requested.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Next we have in camera meeting transcripts.

I apologize, I forgot number seven. I'm trying to be on a diet here; that's why I missed the meals.

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.

Mr. Bruinooge moves the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Motion eight, in camera meetings transcripts, is that one copy of the transcript of all in camera meetings be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee.

Mr. Angus moves the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Motion nine, notice of substantive motions, is that, except for amendments to bills, forty-eight hours' notice be given before any substantive motion is considered by the committee; that the motion be filed with the clerk of the committee and circulated to the members in both official languages. Upon receipt of the notice, the clerk shall put the motion on the agenda of the committee's next meeting.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I have a question. What does 48 hours mean exactly? Is that five o'clock today—

The Chair: Well, 48 hours is 48 hours. It's not two sleeps. We've gone through the two sleeps business before, so it's the real 48 hours.

Ms. Lavallée.

•(1605)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: If you take this to mean 48 hours according to the clock, then I would propose 24 hours instead. That worked very well for one of the other committees on which I served. We even gave ourselves a little breathing room by allowing one sleep. I'm prepared to discuss this option. I don't really want to make this a formal motion, but if members are amenable, I would propose 24 hours.

[*English*]

The Chair: It's moved.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have just two questions, Mr. Chair.

First, then, Saturday at 3:30 p.m. is the deadline for Monday at 3:30 p.m. if it's 48 hours. That's my understanding.

Secondly, what is the position on unanimous consent for a motion being brought forward at a committee?

The Chair: That's my understanding too; yes, it could be brought forward at any time with unanimous consent.

I have to speak to the 48 hours. It's 48 hours of sitting days. You can't put something in on Friday afternoon at 3 o'clock and expect it to be on the agenda at 3 o'clock on Monday; it couldn't go on until the next Wednesday. People have tried to do that. It got me all upset. I don't like those games. If it's fair for everyone, and that's why even in 24 hours....

Again, I go back to how this committee has worked. We've gone through some of these when something's been slipped into the agenda. I would suggest that our 48 hours worked quite well.

I have to go to Ms. Dhalla and then to Mr. Angus.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I just wanted to bring up something that Mr. Angus spoke about and which you've just touched upon in regard to the 48 hours' notice.

On the motion we're being asked to vote on right now, it doesn't specify that it would be during the time that Parliament is actually sitting. If we can ensure that there is some sort of wording put into it so that people wouldn't be putting in motions on Saturday at 9 o'clock in the morning when no one's in Ottawa, we perhaps could just have an amended motion brought forward by the chair. Or if one of us needs to do it, we could.

The Chair: Can I bring it forward?

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: If we have a Friday meeting, we could identify when the cut-off would be.

The Chair: Okay. Then we need a motion.

Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Chair, I think we are speaking right now to an amendment by Mrs. Lavallée, as far as I know, before we deal with anything else. I'd be happy to make the amendment that you called for, but I will first speak to Madam Lavallée's suggestion of 24 hours.

I think you've already alluded to it, Mr. Chair, in that previous committees functioned well with the 48-hour clause. Also having been involved in other committees, I have often seen that 48 hours does give all parties an opportunity to analyze their positions in relation to whatever motion comes forward. I think it is a good use of our time to continue the goodwill among all committee members.

What I'm saying, I guess, is that I'm speaking against the amendment in terms of 24 hours. I don't know if other members would like to speak to it, but I think I've stated the position of all my Conservative colleagues.

The Chair: Mr. Pomerleau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Chair, I'm new to the committee. Therefore, I have never seen you in action. I'm convinced that the members of this committee act in good faith and that you did your job well in the past. That's what I have always heard from Mrs. Lavallée. However, the point we are trying to make here is that it is important to be able to react quickly to events that transpire outside of this forum. If we have 48 hours to respond to these events, excluding weekends, it's possible that our response will come a full week after the event has taken place. Then, it's no longer news. We find this time frame much too long.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Nobody likes a partisan hot-button issue more than I do. That being said, the reason I think 24 hours would not work with our committee is that, again, one of the successes of this committee is that we actually make some long-term commitments on studies. We certainly need time in our committee meetings to discuss issues that suddenly blow up. There will be issues that blow up and there will be contentious issues. If we go down to 24 hours, it certainly destabilizes our ability to deal with witnesses and with long-term planning. At least 48 hours allows us a bit of leeway. I think 24 hours would just be like a three-legged chair that can always be kicked out.

I think what we have works. It allows us the balance of bringing forward the issues that need to be brought forward and also doing the kind of planning that's necessary when we're bringing in witnesses. We draw a lot of witnesses at this committee, so with respect, I would not support this. I recognize where it comes from, but I think we have a good working system.

•(1610)

The Chair: With that statement, I'll call the question on the amendment, Ms. Lavallée, to move the 48 hours' notice to 24 hours' notice.

(Amendment negatived)

The Chair: Who made the motion? Was it Mr. Rodriguez or Ms. Dhalla? We should really have a mover for the motion. I got a little ahead of myself.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: That was Mr. Rodriguez.

The Chair: He moved it originally.

Ms. Dhalla wants to make an amendment.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Perhaps we could add in the words “sitting days” after “48 hours' notice”.

The Chair: So “48 hours' notice (sitting days)”.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I worry about sitting days because, for instance, there have been times such as this summer—I wasn't on the committee—when an issue was brought forward, and they were called. If we're sitting, then.... It should be business days.

The Chair: It should be business days.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Yes, it should be business days.

The Chair: Okay, that's better.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: So it reads: “except for amendments to bills, 48 hours' notice (business days) be given before any substantive motion is considered by the committee”.

The Chair: I'm calling the vote on the amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Chair, just to clarify again, could you please outline for all of the committee members what the final notice time would be if we wanted to submit a motion for Monday's meeting?

The Chair: If you want to submit a motion for Monday's meeting, it would be Thursday.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: It would be Thursday at 3:30.

The Chair: Yes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: That means Thursday, even before the committee meeting. So there will be a committee meeting and if we ever wanted to introduce a motion as the result of what went on at that meeting, it would be the following week before the motion could be discussed. I do not find a week's delay to be very efficient. It serves the interests of the Conservatives, who do not want anything to happen, but I find it a little...

[English]

The Chair: No, no. With what we have now, the motion is carried, I think. We have voted on it, and the motion is carried, so it will be 48 hours' notice—

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...and you have until Thursday, the next day, to put a motion forward for a vote on the Monday.

• (1615)

The Chair: We'll get together and explain it afterwards.

Number 10, staff attending in camera meetings, is that unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person present at in camera meetings.

Ms. Lavallée.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I would like to move an amendment.

[English]

The Chair: Would you like to move the motion?

It's moved by Mr. Bruinooge.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I just want to move an amendment.

As well as each member being able to be accompanied by a staff member, I think it would be nice if we could agree to have a member from each political party. Perhaps the Conservatives, for example, might like to have someone from the whip's office or the leader's office with them. So might the Liberals, the NDP, or ourselves, as well as a political staffer.

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Agreed.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Do you agree?

The Chair: Do you want to be a little more specific?

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Here is how I would write it:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person at an in camera meeting, as well as one additional person from each party.

[English]

The Chair: I have to get this down before I forget it.

Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I just want to make sure that it's one person per party, not another one per MP. Right?

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: No, it is one person per party. It is so that someone from the whip's office, for example, could attend.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. The amendment is the following, after in camera meetings: “as well as one staff person from each party”.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: The amendment is carried. Now we have the motion as it is amended, which is that unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person present at in camera meetings, as well as one staff person from each party.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The committee didn't have anything in its routine motions that would deal with the priority of legislation. I'm just curious. Has it been commonplace in this committee not to have anything that would deal with the priority of legislation?

The Chair: I've been instructed that most committees don't have that, because when a bill is presented to the committee, it's your duty to delve into it.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: We do have a specific recommendation to make with respect to priority of legislation in the committee. I'd like to bring it forward. Certainly we can discuss it and see if the other members see merit in having that written into the actual routine motions of the committee.

The Chair: We can hear your submission.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you.

With respect to priority of legislation, consideration of and examination of any bill, government or private member's, which falls within the express mandate of the committee shall take precedence over any study or non-legislative examination other than questions of privilege. In such circumstances, the non-legislative study shall be deferred until such time as the bill is reported back to the House.

The Chair: Ms. Lavallée.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I am not really in favour of a proposal like that, Mr. Chair. It would mean that anything we were studying could be suddenly interrupted by a government bill. That would completely disrupt our work and mess up the agenda and the action plans that we had set up.

Anyway, there are rules about bills. You have to study a bill within two months, if I remember correctly. Then a committee can ask the House for a 30-day extension. Then, if it has not been studied, the bill goes back to the House as if it had been passed.

So government bills are already protected and that gives them a degree of priority. But I think that our committee has to keep control of its agenda and its action plans, and that we should study government bills when it suits us. As well, it has to be said that this could be a way for the government to interrupt a study that we were in the middle of.

For all those very good reasons, I am going to vote against the proposal.

• (1620)

[English]

The Chair: I need a little clarification on that one. When you talk about how we'll deal with a government bill if the government sends it to the committee and we'll deal with it whenever we feel we're going to deal with it, is it not this committee's purpose that if there is a bill directed to this committee we have to deal with it? It doesn't matter what study we're doing. Am I not correct there?

A voice: It's an order of the House.

The Chair: It's an order of the House that it would come to this committee and we would deal with it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Yes, you are perfectly right, Mr. Chair; it is one of our purposes, but it is not the only one. You can ask the clerk to clarify that for you. It is part of our mandate to study government bills, even private members' bills. The other part of our mandate is to take some initiative and do studies ourselves. The committee has to be the master of its own agenda and action plan. Of course, we do not intend to systematically reject government bills, quite the contrary. We just want to take our time and decide for ourselves the order in which we are going to study bills or do our own studies.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

I think we're somewhere down the middle on this, in that if a substantive piece of legislation is brought before the committee, that becomes the priority. I think that's an understood fact of this committee. That's the way it has always been, and that's the way it always will be. I don't know if we need to enshrine it further at this point, because we can find time with a private member's bill to bring it in. When we deal with estimates, we decide to deal with it, as opposed to being told that this is now government business and we're going to study estimates for the next four weeks. That could certainly throw off our agenda.

So I think it's understood that if the government needs legislation, we will be looking at it. But I don't think we need to further enshrine it with this motion.

The Chair: Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I've heard that this committee did work very well in the past, and that's also good for the future. So I don't necessarily see why we should go ahead with that. I think we should stay with the status quo. It has been working up to now.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I'm happy to defer to the will of the members and withdraw the motion.

The motion extends from the last Parliament, when there were all kinds of extensions needed to be given on private members' business in particular, because committees weren't getting around to dealing with it, which meant that the private member's bill was never getting reported back to the House. I speak on that from experience with other committees that I sat on in the last Parliament. This would actually give them some precedence so they would actually be heard before the committee, rather than just being systematically delayed so they never go back to the House.

That's the reason it's there, but I'm happy to withdraw it if it's the will of the members that it be withdrawn.

The Chair: Is it the will of the members that Mr. Del Mastro withdraw?

(Motion withdrawn)

The Chair: Ms. Lavallée.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Mr. Chair, have we finished with the routine motions? I would like to know if there is anything else on the agenda today or if I can now bring up the action plan.

• (1625)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro put forward earlier that right after our routine motions he would talk about a motion to this committee that, if we're going to discuss it, needs unanimous consent. If we don't have unanimous consent, then we can talk about some further business.

First of all, I'm going to take Mr. Del Mastro's motion that I have in front of me, which is that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage welcome the Honourable James Moore to speak for one hour to the committee members on February 9, to introduce himself to the committee as the new Minister of Canadian Heritage, to share with the committee the work he has undertaken since becoming the Minister of Canadian Heritage, and to discuss the future business of the committee.

This is a motion. Do I have unanimous consent that we could go forward with this motion?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: No.

[*English*]

The Chair: There is no unanimous consent.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: It has to be 48 hours, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As long as the Bloc members understand that I couldn't bring this motion until next Monday, which is the time the minister would be available to come, and then we've got a break week after that, that's fine. But don't complain later that the minister hasn't been here.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: That's your own rule.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: No, it's not my own rule. It was a rule established by the committee.

As long as the Bloc members are okay with the understanding that the minister would like to come. Don't come later and say that the minister hasn't come when you've asked him to come, because the minister has offered to come and appear before the committee. My understanding is that it could be next Monday, or we could rearrange the schedule to be here next Wednesday. But beyond that, if you're not prepared to hear the motion and vote on the motion, then don't come back later and complain that the minister hasn't appeared before committee. I do believe you've got a number of issues you'd like to raise with the minister, and he would be prepared to take those questions.

When I moved the motion, I did remove the words "for one hour" when I read it earlier. But that said, if you're not prepared to hear the

motion now, in fact I probably won't table it again on Wednesday because we're past the timeline that we've established and I'll have to go back to the department and determine when the minister could appear. At that point, we'll probably be into a study and it will be up to us when we'd like the minister to appear, and then we'll be into talking to officials about when his schedule would permit.

So the question is, if you would like the minister to be here, then I need unanimous consent to waive it. If you don't want the minister to appear right now and defer that until some later date, whenever that will be, that's fine. You just have to understand the consequences of not allowing the motion to be tabled, that's all.

The Chair: Mr. Bruinooge and then Ms. Glover.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: I assume, Mr. Chair, that you have ruled that Mr. Del Mastro's initial motion was out of order, because I believe he motioned before we set our routine motions in place.

The Chair: Correct.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: So you did rule it out of order?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Okay. Then in that regard, I have nothing to say.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Glover.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): I just want to make mention of this as a new committee member and a new member of Parliament.

Congratulations, first of all, on being nominated and elected as the chair.

I also want to extend a hand to the opposition members who are here at committee helping us new members to understand exactly how all of this works.

The first thing I'd like to know about is that when we vote on a motion such as the one we've just voted on, which says "substantive motions", surely to goodness a prudent person would think that a motion such as one inviting our minister here is not what I would call a substantive motion that would require 48 hours' notice. I'm wondering if there is some explanation of what a substantive motion would be, because I simply don't feel this would be one that qualifies under the terminology. Therefore, we should be able to hear the motion.

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I agree with my colleague. I think this motion was brought before the House before the committee was set up. There was discussion about the minister coming.

I certainly am very keen to engage the minister. If there is a substantive reason not to have the minister come, or a reason for this to be deferred, I would like to hear it. But as for just saying it's out of order, I don't think that was the understanding. My understanding was that if I bring a motion now, in the middle of a meeting, that's out of order. But this was clearly brought to us and we had 48 hours. So if there is a good reason that he doesn't come to committee in the next two weeks—and I know that after that it might be harder—I'd like to hear it, because otherwise I think this motion needs to be discussed.

• (1630)

The Chair: Ms. Dhalla.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I think it is important that the minister come before the committee. As has just been stated by my colleague, the motion was brought forward before we adopted the rules. I think it was at a request, and in a good spirit of cooperation, that the vote on the motion was deferred. I think it is important that we call a vote on it.

The Chair: Mr. Rodriguez.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I think that, in the spirit of cooperation, we could come to an agreement. We could ask general questions, without limiting ourselves.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Lavallée.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I certainly want to work in a spirit of cooperation, Mr. Chair. Nothing would give me more pleasure. But I think that all of us around this table have a duty to be logical and consistent. Scarcely 20 minutes ago, we voted on a proposal whereby motions had to be submitted with 48 hours' notice. I was opposed to that and said that it was not consistent with reality or with our needs as parliamentarians. Does everyone understand that, no matter what happens today, I have to make my motion at the end of this meeting? Even if I give it to the clerk at the end of this meeting, I will not be able to discuss it until next Monday. That is a calendar week. I feel that is a long time, and not very efficient. That is my first point.

My second point is about the consistency. You voted for 48 hours, but because the Conservative party wants to bring its minister here so that he can brag about his alleged budget, we have to roll out the red carpet and forget all the rules just because it is the minister. If what he has to say is really important, I am sure that he could come at another time. Anyway, we can ask him questions in the House of Commons every day. I have asked him questions almost every day since the House reconvened. So we can talk to him and it is his duty to talk to us. We also have the adjournment debates. Instead of sending us his parliamentary secretary, he could perhaps come and provide us with some answers during the late show at 5:30 p.m. If he really wants to answer our questions, he can. So, if you really want the minister to come here next week, you have to take another look at the routine motions, change 48 hours' notice to 24 hours' notice, or allow exceptions. That is consistency in my mind, Mr. Chair.

I certainly want to meet the minister, Mr. Chair. In fact, I went to his office last November and got a lot of answers to my questions. I

suggest that everyone does the same. I am sure that he can find another convenient time to tell us what he was going to tell us next week. As the minister, does he think that he does not have to follow the rules we have just established? Does he think that they do not apply to him? I am sure that is not what our Conservative friends meant.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Certainly we can ask questions in question period; however, he's a new minister and we all have many questions. I think this is a misinterpretation of what the standing orders of this committee are and I think we would be off to a very bad first round. If Madam Lavallée thinks we're going to be able to get the minister back when she says he's going to come back, because she calls him back, well, I've been around here long enough to know that when a minister decides he's not coming back, we wait and we wait and we wait.

The offer has been made. I think it's an offer in good faith. There will be issues on which we want him to come back in the future, and we will no doubt put in a 48-hour notice, but I'm asking you as chair to rule on this because I think she is misinterpreting the standing regulations.

They certainly made efforts to speak to each one of our parties about this in advance. If the committee hadn't been struck, it would have been impossible to bring this in on 48 hours' notice. They did make every effort.

We defer to you. I think this is a good way to start off our committee hearings. More questions will be given. We need to move on. I think you need to overrule this objection.

• (1635)

The Chair: Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Chair, I have one last objection. It's similar to what Mr. Angus is stating. Of course, I put forth in the last round my understanding of how Mr. Del Mastro's motion was actually put on the table and accepted by you previous to our routine motions being adopted. Also, Mr. Angus has made that similar statement, as has Madam Dhalla. So in light of the fact that there's a multi-partisan understanding of what occurred here in our committee today, I think maybe you could consider having a ruling on this. Either way, obviously, that would end this discussion.

The Chair: I must say that this motion was brought forward before we went through our routine motions and their adoption.

I understand. I've gone through the two sleeps, I've gone through the 24 hours, and I've gone through all the various things over the last couple of years of how people wanted to circumvent this committee. I remember, when I was sitting in opposition, how many times we asked the minister to come before a committee and I remember not getting the minister at all. He didn't come. When you have a minister who has said he will come before a committee and we're saying, well, because it's not....

This motion was brought forward at 4:30. Forty-eight hours would be 4:30 on Wednesday. I took out the one hour. If you want to give up an hour, I will accept this motion that the minister come before us, and if he doesn't come at 3:30 because he's not allowed to come in and take questions at 3:30, then he comes in at 4:30. That's what I will—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: No way! A point of order, Mr. Chair.

That means that if the motion is made now, we are going to debate it in 48 hours. That is what your rules mean. I just have one thing to say. The Standing Committee on Heritage stopped work last August 26. We did not finish our work analyzing the recent elimination of federal government programs that provided funding for culture. We had agreed that committee members were going to provide the clerk with a list of witnesses.

If you agree to this proposal, you will surely agree to my motion. I would like my motion discussed too. It deals with our action plan. If an exception is being made for Mr. Del Mastro, I would like an exception to be made for me too so that we can discuss future work as well as analyze the funding cuts. I am prepared to make an exception for Mr. Del Mastro, but I would like the same courtesy.

•(1640)

[*English*]

The Chair: I stand corrected in my statement, because we didn't have unanimous consent and that's quite noticeable around the room. It looks as if we're going to have a kind of rocky road in this committee again, and if that's what it's going to be, then we're going to have long, long meetings. I don't like long, long meetings where there are hardships put out for whomever. I don't take that lightly. If you don't want the minister here, the minister may never, ever set foot in this room. I honour what Mr. Del Mastro said, in that the minister has said he can be here next Monday. We can talk about it.

This motion has been brought forward today, and I'm going to make a ruling that we will deal with this motion first thing on Wednesday. If we can't first thing on Wednesday, then at 4:30 this will have had 48 hours—it's been in front of me at least for 48 hours, and it's been to the clerk within 48 hours—and we will then deal with this on Wednesday. I am not going to bend on the 48 hours.

Ms. Dhalla.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I understand that people have differing viewpoints and so forth, but from everyone I have spoken to who has sat on this committee beforehand, including you, Mr. Chair, and from all of the feedback I've heard, this committee has worked extremely well. There has been a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, and that's why it's unfortunate that this meeting is getting off to the start that it is.

I think it's important that the speakers list that is formed by the clerk be respected. I understand that people get passionate and want to interrupt other speakers, but I think I was on the speakers list twice and I was interrupted by one of our colleagues. I think it's important that if you have something to say, you raise your hand and go in turn, whenever your name is on the speakers list.

The second thing I wanted to bring forward is the fact that right now we're not scheduled to sit on Wednesday. If people have such difficulty voting for an important motion.... I think all of us around this room do want to hear from the minister, and we do want to ask him questions on what's impacting cultural organizations across the country and impacting many Canadians, but if we are not scheduled to sit on Wednesday because we cannot resolve an issue in five minutes, which I think would be very simple, then I would request that you call a meeting and we utilize all of the resources we have around the table here just to deal with a simple motion, because people in this room are not being flexible enough to deal with it at hand. I think having to call a meeting on Wednesday because we are not being flexible and perhaps prudent enough to deal with an important motion is really a waste of the resources, the time and energy of the people of the House of Commons, especially the administrative staff.

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker.... You would make an excellent Speaker, by the way. Have I ever told you that?

The Chair: Butter me up.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Chair, again, this first meeting is to establish the ground rules for how we're going to work with each other. I think Madame Lavallée is under the misunderstanding that she cannot discuss future business without a motion. If we have to have motions with 48 hours' notice to discuss how we're going to work together, then this committee will never work.

I was actually thinking we were going to sit down today and hear from people about their ideas, because what we need in this committee is a long-term vision. We have short-term issues, but there are key elements on which we as a committee can agree to work together. If we have to cancel the meeting now and walk out of here so that we walk back in on Wednesday at 3:30 and agree to this motion, so be it, but it sets a really bad precedent in terms of how we are going to work on future issues. We then should sit down and say, so what is it we need to do? Well, so-and-so would like to look at this, or how about this? We have done that on every substantive piece of work that this committee has done.

Mr. Chair, I'll back you up 100%. I'll be damned if this committee is going to be reduced to the dysfunction I've seen in other committees. If we cannot work on some basic goodwill and trust, we are wasting the taxpayers' money. I would like us to deal with this now, but if we have to, then I'd say let's leave now and come back at 3:30 on Wednesday, vote to have the minister come, and then from there on in we'll just have to piece it as we go along.

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, I appreciate the comments of the members at the table. I think, in fairness to what Mr. Angus is getting at, I did undertake to speak to the opposition critics last week with respect to this motion to let them know the committee hadn't been struck.

I had gone to the minister some months ago and requested that the minister would appear before the committee soon after it was struck to answer questions that I know all the members at the committee table have, because I was here in the summer when we had an emergency meeting of this committee. That was never resolved, frankly. I think it would only be responsible for those to be resolved so that the committee can move forward and undertake studies that I think would bring value not just to this committee but to this Parliament, and ultimately to those we all represent.

So that's why the minister's coming. And I did make sure that everyone had plenty of notice and I tried to make sure that we could vote on it. I think it's complete nonsense that we'd have to come back here on Wednesday at 4:30 to vote on a motion that, from what I can see, is strongly supported. I'll come back on Wednesday at 4:30 if I have to, but I can't understand why we can't deal with it right now.

•(1645)

The Chair: Ms. Lavallée.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I do not want to be difficult. As I said, I want to work cooperatively, but also consistently. You voted for the 48 hours, I did not. I did not want that; 24 hours would have suited me. You have to know what you are voting for and the consequences it has.

That said, Mr. Chair, I am ready to vote on Mr. Moore's visit, especially if we can ask him questions on any topic.

But I would like us to discuss the committee's action plan, which is to analyze the effect of the elimination of government funding programs for artists. I am ready to discuss Mr. Moore's visit if I can then discuss the action plan and the funding cuts. That is moving in your direction, is it not?

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It seems reasonable, if she's ready, to discuss and vote on the motion. I agree that there are other topics we should be able to discuss.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Chair, with all due respect, I'm going to bring forward a challenge to your assertion that Mr. Del Mastro's original motion was not in good standing. I think this might be the only way for us to break this situation.

An hon. member: She's already agreed to it, so why don't you just—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Oh, she agreed to it? Okay, I didn't understand that she had agreed to it.

An hon. member: Why don't you just call the question?

The Chair: Okay. I'm going to call the question, being that we do have—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: I want it to be clear: we vote on the minister coming and then we discuss the budget cuts.

[*English*]

Is it clear for you?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: We can talk about whatever you want. We're going to vote on the motion that I've presented; is that what I am to understand?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Fine. We can talk about whatever you like after that.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: No. I do not want you telling me afterwards that it needs a motion with 48 hours' notice. You can understand that I would be annoyed if you did.

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: No, no, we can talk about committee business anyway.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Agreed. We sat on the Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics together, then we...

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, let's get one thing clear here. We do have consensus to deal with the motion. We'll deal with the motion, and then after we deal with the motion we'll talk about the future business of this committee. That's where I was heading.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: That is fine.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

The notice of motion by Dean Del Mastro, MP, February 2, 2009, is that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage welcome the Honourable James Moore to speak for one hour to the committee members on February 9, to introduce himself to the committee as the new Minister of Canadian Heritage, to share with the committee the work he has undertaken since becoming the Minister of Canadian Heritage, and to discuss the future business of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: There, we've got that piece of business done.

Mr. Rodriguez, then Ms. Lavallée, and then Mr. Angus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, I have lost my voice. I am going to let Mrs. Lavallée speak. We have to talk about two important topics: the \$45 million in budget cuts that have still not been explained to us, and copyright.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: OK. I will talk about that.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: My voice has gone.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Lavallée.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: The committee met for the last time on August 26 when we were doing some very important work on behalf of Quebec artists. You will see what I mean, Mr. Chair.

I am going to go right to my motion. It is not hard to find because it reflects the three last sentences of the August 26 minutes.

I move that the committee discuss the recent elimination of federal government funding programs for arts and culture, and that the committee hold a meeting on Wednesday, February 4 on the recent elimination of federal government funding programs for arts and culture, and that the members of the committee send the committee clerk a list of witnesses by a date to be decided, possibly next Friday.

As for copyright, this is dealt with in Bill C-61 that the government tabled in the House of Commons last June 12. It is a government bill. We are all anxious to see this bill become law. It is a priority of the minister, it was in the Speech from the Throne, and we all appreciate it. The bill will most likely be studied by the Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, in whose area it lies. The government could also decide to establish a legislative committee.

• (1650)

[English]

The Chair: I said that I would entertain future business. Have you not just proposed questions that would go directly to the minister next Monday when he is here?

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: No, Mr. Chair. You were here in August. You know that we are talking about the committee's action plan. I am proposing that we discuss the elimination of the programs and why they were cut. I would like us to hear witnesses who could explain to us why they needed those programs.

In culture, it often just takes a little help to make great things happen. The Trade Routes program, for example, provided \$2 million so that artists could go on hundreds of tours around the world. The return was \$25 million. That was the conclusion of a study done by 300 Canadian cultural organizations. So it is important for the Committee on Canadian Heritage to bring these people here and listen to them. After we listen, we may perhaps want to see the minister again and ask him questions.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Chair, I just want to speak to the motion.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm on the list.

The Chair: Mr. Angus was on the list.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: That's fine.

Mr. Charlie Angus: There are a couple of things.

Again, we are discussing ideas. I think we need to be looking at this. We're going to be here for four months, and we have a number

of things to discuss. I certainly support hearing witnesses. I think it's important. It's business that's unfinished, and we need to finish the business.

I'd like to have a sense of who those witnesses would be so that we have a sense of how long. I don't think we need to spend months. I think maybe it would take three meetings. That's my initial sense.

I'd be wary of meeting about it on Wednesday, because we don't have any witnesses. I'd like to come prepared. I'd like to hear. I would like us to put to the clerk some of the people we think could speak to it, whether that would take two meetings, one meeting, or three meetings, and then we could deal with that and come up with recommendations or be satisfied. I think it would be a way to deal with that.

I would be really against putting time into a legislative study of a dead bill. The copyright legislation died when the election was called. We don't know what changes there will be, so I don't find it would be of much use for us as a committee to address legislation that's no more.

I think there are a number of elements we could be looking at in terms of studies. I'm certainly interested in looking at the monetizing possibilities that are out there and business models that are actually working. Those have nothing to do with legislation per se, but they tie into stuff we've been dealing with in the film study, with CBC, and how people are monetizing back catalogues. There are a lot of elements that keep coming up that we've never had a chance to look at. They're not top-of-mind issues, but if we could spend a number of months on them, in and out of our other issues, they'd be something I would certainly like to have on the agenda.

Mr. Chair, I know you're interested in museums. They're something we can certainly fit in. We don't have to spend every meeting on them, but we can decide on that, whether that would take three or four meetings.

Certainly, I think Madam Lavallée's issue is top of mind because it's unfinished business from the summer. So let's pick some witnesses, and let's talk about the witnesses together. Again, I think we can all agree who should be there and who's necessary, and then we can get the business dealt with.

• (1655)

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to carry on with the point made by Mr. Angus, obviously I have no problem with the motion that Madam Lavallée would like to bring forward in that regard. I'd suggest that she could bring it with everyone's knowledge, frankly, that it's coming. You could bring that forward on Monday because that is the next scheduled meeting of the committee, and then assuming it would pass—call me clairvoyant—we could undertake to begin that next Wednesday or at some future date immediately after.

I do have a number of things I would like to talk about. Mr. Angus has mentioned museums. I'd love to see the committee undertake a study on museums, with a goal towards making specific recommendations for the adoption of a new museums strategy in Canada.

In 1994, for example, the federal government under Prime Minister Chrétien commissioned a study on the national historic sites of Canada on the 75th anniversary of the national historic sites. We're coming up to the 90th anniversary, so the 15th anniversary of that report being commissioned. I'd like us to take a look at that to see how we're doing at following the specific recommendations on that. Our national heritage sites are incredibly important to the heritage of Canada. I think we're perhaps missing the boat on the opportunity that might be there to promote a greater Canadian identity.

Lastly, I'd like to see the committee undertake a study on making specific recommendations for a heritage hunting and fishing act. I believe it is critically important to our aboriginal people and also to rural Canadians that we take a look at hunting and fishing, and take a look at what should be established on the books with respect to hunting and fishing, in view of Canada's history.

Those are some ideas I have. We can certainly entertain others that we might undertake studies on. I think we'll find, if the committee wants to add value to Parliament, there are a number of opportunities we can undertake on a number of fronts to do that.

The Chair: Ms. Dhalla.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Some of the ideas that have been mentioned are excellent. I understand there's also renewal coming up for some of the private broadcasters this year and in the early part of next year. It may be beneficial for the committee to have some nationwide consultations to see what types of changes or suggestions people have. There's more of a time sensitivity to that issue than to some of the other ones that have been mentioned.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Sure, absolutely.

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

Just so that we stay on a coherent path, can I suggest to the people who are bringing suggestions forward that they maybe bring forward a one-pager or less, so that we have a sense of where people are going? That would allow us, I think, over the next few meetings.... I don't think we have to demand by Wednesday or Monday, but I think we have to look over the next two weeks that we're going to roughly set up a calendar, leaving enough spaces, as the chair always does, for other issues that come up.

The main issue right now is moving forward with Madame Lavallée's concern, because this is from the summer and this is outstanding business. Can we agree to look at witnesses, come back, have a sense of how many witnesses are realistic? Then we'd actually have a sense of whether it could be two meetings, three meetings, or five meetings. Then we could agree to move forward at that level.

The Chair: Okay. I will go to Ms. Dhalla.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I think that's an excellent idea, to put forward the names of witnesses, so that we can determine how many meetings it would take. In the interim, as we're going through that process, if every party submitted perhaps three priority areas they wanted the committee to study, we could pass that around and then all have a vote to get a consensus as to what the areas should be and the order of precedence.

The Chair: Okay, and we'll go forward that way for the next meeting.

With that, I think I'm going to use the gavel and adjourn the meeting.

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