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Wednesday, February 4, 2009

—
Chair

Mr. Rick Casson

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• (1540)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jacques Lahaie): Members of the committee, I see a quorum. We can now proceed to the election of the chair. I'm ready to receive motions for the election of a chair.

Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): You go ahead, Bryon.

The Clerk: Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): I would be delighted to nominate Rick Casson to the position of chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): I second that motion.

The Clerk: Are there any other motions?

It has been moved by the Honourable Bryon Wilfert that Mr. Rick Casson be elected chair of the committee. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Casson duly elected chair of the committee.

The Chair (Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you very much for that, committee.

It's good to see some familiar faces—I was going to say “old faces”, but I won't—and some new faces, particularly a very young one over on the side of the Bloc. Welcome, and I look forward to our continuing on. This is a great committee to be on, for the newcomers, and it's a great committee to chair. I appreciate the honour.

Are there any nominations for the first vice-chair?

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): I nominate Bryon Wilfert for the first vice-chair.

The Chair: Any seconder?

Hon. Keith Martin: I so move.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I second that.

The Chair: Moved by Mr. Martin and seconded by Mr. Hawn that Mr. Wilfert be the first vice-chair. Are there any other nominations?

It seems, Mr. Wilfert, that by unanimous consent you are the first vice-chair. Congratulations.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now we have to have a second vice-chair. Nominations?

Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): I'd like to nominate Mr. Claude Bachand.

[English]

The Chair: It is moved by Mr. Coderre that Mr. Bachand be the second vice-chair. That's seconded by Ms. Black.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Claude, congratulations. You're the second vice-chair.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Shall I make a speech?

The Chair: Committee, customarily that's all the business that can be handled at the opening or organizational meeting, unless there is unanimous consent to move on to the routine orders of proceeding or the routine motions for committees. Are you willing to do that today?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay, great, let's do that.

We have the motions as they stood in the last Parliament. We all have copies. They're being distributed right now. In order to get the discussion started, I'd like a motion to pass or adopt these routine motions. That will open the discussion.

It's been moved by Mr. Wilfert that the motions as distributed be adopted as the routine motions under which this committee operates. Is there any discussion on that? Are there any amendments proposed?

We'll have Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I have a couple of amendments. Can we do them one at a time?

The Chair: Yes, please do, if you have a suggestion on one of them.

I'll go through them one at a time.

First is the services of analysts from the Library of Parliament. Is that pretty clear the way it is? Is it accepted?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I'd like to invite them, now that we're going to hire them, to come and sit at the table and take notes.

You all know Wolf and Jim.

Gentlemen, welcome back. It's a pleasure to have you. You do good work for us, and we appreciate that.

On number one, the services of analysts from the Library of Parliament, we're good to go.

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

The Chair: The second one is the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. Are there any changes there?

Go ahead, Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I have an amendment.

Where it says, "the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of the Chair, the two Vice-Chairs and a member of the other opposition party", I'd like to add "Parliamentary Secretary" to that list, which corresponds to page 847 in Marleau-Montpetit.

The Chair: It's been proposed by Mr. Hawn that "Parliamentary Secretary" be added to the list in the motion as circulated.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Chair, as the mover of the amendment, may I lead off the discussion?

The Chair: Yes, you may.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

First of all, as I mentioned, it conforms to page 847 of Marleau-Montpetit. The other aspect is that the parliamentary secretary was a non-voting member of the subcommittee last time. In point of fact, we have four opposition members, one from each party, as voting members of the subcommittee. They are all partisan members. The non-partisan member, of course, is the chair. It would make it fair in terms of having one voting member from each of the parties, under the chairmanship, obviously, of the non-partisan chair. It does conform to Marleau-Montpetit.

• (1545)

The Chair: I have a speaking request.

We'll have Mr. Bachand and then Ms. Black.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, with all due respect for Mr. Hawn, a person I like a great deal, I must object.

May I remind the Conservative Party that when it was in opposition, it was opposed to the idea of the parliamentary secretary serving on the national defence committee. There was some discussion at the time and the Liberal Party, which formed a majority government then, had naturally decided otherwise. Today, not only does the parliamentary secretary sit on the committee, but they would also like him to sit on the steering committee. That's going a little too far.

We must never forget that Mr. Hawn represents the eyes and ears of the Minister of National Defence at the table. Committee should

not be overly politicized. Moreover, Marleau and Montpetit comment many times on the importance of committees and on how they should be a forum as much as possible for open, non-partisan debate.

This proposed nomination is another step in favour of partisanship. Therefore, the Bloc Québécois intends to oppose this motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Black.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): I'm also opposed, Mr. Chair, for the reasons my colleague Mr. Bachand mentioned, but also because parliamentary committees are meant to be the creatures of Parliament, of the House of Commons. They're not meant to be an avenue for government to have the kind of influence it has in other bodies of Parliament. So in our committees you, as the chairperson—and not the parliamentary secretary—are meant to be the conduit to your government. Every commission that's been held on parliamentary reform, every commission that has been held in consultation with parliamentary experts and Canadians at large has in fact recommended against parliamentary secretaries even sitting on committees.

I think we have already offered an olive branch by virtue of the fact that parliamentary secretaries sit on committees, but I think the subcommittee on procedure and House affairs should be as it was the last time, with a representative of each party.

And just to correct what Mr. Hawn said, there are not four opposition parties here, there are three.

The Chair: All right, thanks for that.

Mr. Blaney, do you have a comment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): If I may, Mr. Chair, I'd like to say something.

While I'm eager to hear what the Official Opposition has to say about this, I have to point out that I once chaired a subcommittee and in my estimation, having a parliamentary secretary as a member is an added bonus, precisely for the reasons you gave. Even though the parliamentary secretary is only one person, when a vote is taken—the subcommittee already operates by consensus—he can convey the government's perspective on issues and steer the discussion in certain directions. I believe his presence helps the committee to do a better job and to organize its work. By knowing what the government is planning, MPs can work more effectively. On a more personal note, I have to say that it makes the Chair's job easier, because he must always remain somewhat reserved.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Coderre.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Chair, I truly do have confidence in you. You will do an amazing job, as suggested. I think a balance has always been achieved. In any event, the members of this committee have always worked very well and the parliamentary secretary will always be free to express his opinion. Besides, we'll always have the option of deciding differently from the steering committee and of moving amendments, if necessary, especially when it comes to the studies that we want to carry out. I don't think we want to upset this balance. Since the four parties are represented on the steering committee, I don't think we need to add anything else. We're ready to vote.

[*English*]

The Chair: I have Ms. Gallant, and then I'll let Mr. Hawn wrap up, and then we'll move on.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like some clarification but would like to start off by clarifying for Ms. Black that it is not something new that we have a parliamentary secretary sitting on this standing committee, so really it's not an olive branch. As a matter of fact, I recall when Mr. Martin was parliamentary secretary to defence, he sat on this committee as well, so it's not something out of the norm that we've acquiesced to.

I just want to verify something, having never sat on the steering committee. Does the chairman of this committee not have a vote when things are discussed on the steering committee?

• (1550)

The Chair: The steering committee historically has resolved issues by consensus, and I don't recall if I have had a vote since I've been chair. At the steering committee we've usually been able to come to consensus. So we don't actually work it that way, but I believe I would have a vote if it came to that.

Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I obviously know how the vote's going to go. May I suggest we do the same we did last time? The parliamentary secretary sits on the steering committee as an adviser who can bring some guidance to the committee when we're discussing issues on which what's going on in the department might have some influence. We did that last time. That seemed to work. He would sit as a non-voting member on the steering committee. That obviously is subject to the vote we're going to take, and we know how that's going to go.

The Chair: Mr. Martin, do you still want to comment?

Hon. Keith Martin: This is a point of correction. When I was parliamentary secretary for defence I did not sit on the steering committee. The parliamentary secretary is really an extension of the government, so it wasn't appropriate, respecting the independence of the committee, for a parliamentary secretary, an arm of the government, to influence the core committee that decided the business of the committee in many ways. For that reason, I was excluded from being there.

The Chair: We'll vote on the amendment that the parliamentary secretary be added to the subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: I'm going to ask for a vote on the motion as it sits, because of this discussion.

The issue I have is that anybody on this committee can come to a subcommittee meeting. Is everybody of that understanding?

A voice: No.

The Chair: Anybody who wants to can come, but only the members can make the decisions. If I'm wrong, please indicate that.

Claude, you look puzzled. Am I wrong there?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Are you saying that any member is free to attend meetings of the subcommittee?

[*English*]

The Chair: No, it's any member of the committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: I do not believe so. We have already discussed the matter of allowing our assistants to attend subcommittee meetings along with us and we agreed to that. As far as I know, no other MPs have ever participated.

Mr. Hawn says that he will not be entitled to vote, but he will be there in the room, so it's boils down to the same thing. It's not what I wanted to see.

The aim of the subcommittee is to steer the work of the main committee. I want to stress that the main committee, not the subcommittee, always has the final say. The subcommittee explores different avenues and has the power to make recommendations. If everyone is allowed to attend subcommittee meetings, even though they can't vote, then it's really no longer a subcommittee.

[*English*]

The Chair: I stand corrected.

Mr. Coderre.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Claude is quite right. It's important to distinguish between the committee as a whole and the subcommittee. The notion of being present implies that persons who are present are prepared to take part in the work of this committee.

However, I would like to propose an amendment that has nothing to do with MPs. It's identical to what Claude was proposing earlier. I would like to propose that one member of our staff be permitted to attend, for example, someone from the whip's office. We could have pressing administrative requirements that have nothing to do with what's happening with the committee as such. I'm simply suggesting that each member from the different parties be allowed to bring along a staff member or someone from the whip's office.

• (1555)

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any further discussion? So we're voting on the way it was last time?

Mr. Blaney.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, getting back to something I mentioned earlier, the committee must take into account a new reality, namely the representational nature of the members of the steering committee. It is important for us to represent our political parties. When we serve on a committee, we do so as MPs on behalf of our political party.

As for this motion respecting the composition of the subcommittee, I see that there would be a one representative of each political party, including the three opposition parties. That means three representatives of the opposition for six committee members: Ms. Black, who would be representing herself, Mr. Bachand, who would be representing two people, and Mr. Wilfert, who would be representing three people. We also have a hybrid chair, someone who must stand by and who represents five other people.

As I see it, the steering committee should reflect the composition of the main committee. A member of our party should have a voice on the steering committee, for the two reasons that I have already outlined. First of all, even though he is from the same political party as us, the Chair must be able to assume the role of Chair. It is not the duty of the Chair to remain neutral, but rather to act as an arbitrator in committee, in addition to representing his colleagues.

[English]

The Chair: Hold on for just a second.

Hon. Denis Coderre: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we are discussing an issue that has already been dealt with by the amendment. We already have another amendment here. The amendment was for clerical reasons. I don't know if it's here in English. We asked to have present one representative from the whip's office of each political party.

To remind my colleague here, it's a steering committee. The final decision-making will be with the full committee, so it's totally irrelevant. I suggest, because we dealt with the first amendment, that we go to my amendment and see. If we need to go formal, let's do it. But deal with the amendment that I was putting forward—with respect, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I apologize. I didn't realize you'd put that amendment forward. I thought you said you were going to deal with it at another time.

Hon. Denis Coderre: No. We have to work on your French.

The Chair: I was listening here.

Mr. Steven Blaney: If I may, Mr. Chair, I have another amendment, but I agree that we should discuss the amendment that is on the table. So I'll just keep my comments for the amendment, for which I'm sure I can get some nice support.

Thank you.

The Chair: I know staff was mentioned, but it's mentioned for an in camera meeting. So you're suggesting that staff be here, at least one member from each party, at the steering committees. That's your amendment.

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

[Translation]

Mr. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, I would like to move an amendment.

The representative nature of the steering committee must always be considered. The composition of the steering committee must reflect representation in the House. For that very reason, my amendment calls for another member of the government party to be appointed to the steering committee, for the sake of democracy. I mentioned two reasons earlier. Even though he serves on this body, the Chair has a role to play. This additional member would allow us to direct our requests to the committee through one of the government members.

So then, my motion calls for the appointment of an additional government member.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, we've heard that amendment. I don't know if we need any more discussion on that.

Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you for the amendment. You're reading my mind, Mr. Blaney. In fact I was just consulting with our researchers for some institutional memory, and they did confirm that from time to time, in addition to the chair of the steering committee, there has been a member of the government on the steering committee. So I support that amendment.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: To add to that, obviously I support that amendment. If the committee or subcommittee feels threatened by the presence of the parliamentary secretary—which didn't seem to cause a problem last time—then obviously this would be a fair solution or a compromise to that.

● (1600)

The Chair: I'm going to call the question on the recent amendment to add one member of the government.

(Amendment negated)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Chair, I would like to propose another amendment: that the parliamentary secretary sit on the steering committee as an advisory member, as was done last time, and that seemed to work just fine.

The Chair: A non-voting advisory member?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Exactly.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Just a second.

Make clear what you're proposing.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: What I'm proposing is, as was done the last time, at the last evolution of this committee, the parliamentary secretary sat with the steering committee just as an advisor, a non-voting advisor. That worked well last time and didn't seem to cause any problems, and I see no reason that shouldn't continue this time.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Chair, we have some amazing analysts. Therefore, we really have no need for advisors. We cannot take a roundabout way of achieving something that we have already dealt with directly.

Regarding the motion now on the table, amendments concerning the composition of the committee have been moved and rejected. Therefore, since we've already ruled on the composition of the committee, I would think that this amendment is

[English]

out of order, because we already settled that issue. So voting or not voting is not the point here; it's what should be composed because of that.

We like you. Don't take anything personally.

I think we've already dealt with that issue, and I would propose that we vote on the main motion.

The Chair: I suppose it's not a direct member of the subcommittee, because it will not be a voting member, Denis, but I do believe it has something to do with the composition of the meetings. So I'm inclined just to bring it to a vote, and then we'll move on.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Let me ask a question. What has changed from the last time to make it acceptable last time and not this time?

Hon. Denis Coderre: We've looked at it, and I'm back in the new "Coderre", and I believe that it's okay like that. It's not a problem. The problem is why do we want to have you there when you're already in the full committee, and we take the final decision here?

That's just logic. It's nothing personal.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I have another question, Mr. Chair.

I don't take it personally.

I throw this out as an advisor, as somebody who can bring some perspective from the department to the steering committee, to provide information it may not have. It would seem to have worked pretty well last time.

Hon. Denis Coderre: The advisors are there. We have a general here.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: They're not in the government.

The Chair: One at a time. Let's go through the chair.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Let me just say, Mr. Chair, I'm a little disappointed. We had a very good working committee and subcommittee last time, and I'm sure we will again this time. It's just a bit disappointing to see a step backwards, in my view, from adding what I think was valuable input last time to the subcommittee. It's too bad the other members don't see it that way.

The Chair: Mr. Boughen.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

From what I hear in the dialogue and discussions, I think we may be missing a key part of the question. I think the key part of the question is whether Mr. Hawn is going to be a good, solid resource

for the committee, whether he will bring something to the committee that the rest of us can't bring to the committee because we don't have his background. I think as a committee we want to have all the solid resources we can have, and I would certainly sponsor Mr. Hawn's presence there, because I think he would bring something that facilitates decision-making that the rest of us don't bring.

I'll leave it there, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thanks for that input.

Claude, did you have a comment, or are you voting?

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: No, I'm not voting. *Vous n'avez pas encore demandé le vote.*

Mr. Dawn needs to have confidence in the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure. I appreciate Mr. Hawn's great qualities. If the subcommittee really needs him, then it can always invite him to a meeting; that's up to us to decide. There is no need for him to be an integral member of the subcommittee. He needs to trust us: when we need his services, we will certainly call on him for help and invite him to attend our meeting. Again, Mr. Hawn needs to have confidence in us.

I'm satisfied with the current makeup of the subcommittee. When we need the parliamentary secretary's help, we will let him know and gladly welcome him.

• (1605)

[English]

The Chair: Thanks for that.

Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I would like to add that it's not a matter of trust or no trust. I do trust the subcommittee. This committee has worked very well together before. It happened many times that when things came up during subcommittee meetings, I was able to add a perspective that other subcommittee members didn't have. You're going to lose that opportunity of the moment, because I'm not going to be at that meeting. It worked very well last time, from my point of view, and I didn't hear any objections or any contradictory statements that it didn't work well. So why mess with something that's been working?

The Chair: Thank you. I appreciate those comments.

Mr. Blaney, for comments, and then we have to bring this to a conclusion.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, Mr. Hawn's approach is constructive, because it would help advance of the work of the committee. I think it would be interesting to have him on the subcommittee. As the saying goes, when it's not broke, don't fix in. This committee is one that works very well, and I'm confident that it will continue to work well. The presence of the parliamentary secretary has in the past helped to set the agenda, guide witnesses and circulate information among committee members.

In terms of representation, this is an important consideration. I'm surprised to see how well represented the other side is. To ensure fairness among the different committee members, I feel it is important for the parliamentary secretary to serve on the steering committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: I appreciate those comments. Anything further?

Okay, I'm going to call the question on the amendment put forward by Mr. Hawn that the parliamentary secretary sit on the subcommittee as a non-voting advisor.

(Amendment negatived)

The Chair: So now we will vote on the main motion as it appears on your paper.

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

The Chair: Reduced quorum: That the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least three members are present, including one member of the opposition.

Any discussion?

There seems to be an amendment. Okay.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I propose an amendment to the first paragraph to say that the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four members are present, including one member from each recognized party.

This would obviously allow for a balance of the quorum.

The Chair: Do we accept that amendment?

An hon. member: It was taken as friendly.

The Chair: No, it doesn't seem to be friendly. So we have it. We'll open up for debate.

Ms. Black and then Mr. Bachand.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Chair, I'm sorry to be opposed to the amendment that Mr. Hawn presented, but my experience early on at this committee, when we had some witnesses here, was that the government members walked out on all the witnesses one day, and that ensured that the meeting could not proceed. Witnesses who had been brought to this meeting here—at Canadian taxpayers' expense, as a matter of fact—were left high and dry.

My concern with this amendment is that we could have a situation where one government member can dictate whether or not we will hear witnesses. The past experience I had in that situation indicates to me that I must oppose this amendment.

•(1610)

The Chair: Mr. Bachand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Let me put it another way: I cannot give the government a veto right. All it would take is for all of the government members to walk out and we would be left with only two or three people. We would not be able to hear from witnesses

and we would have to stop the meeting. I clearly recall the incident mentioned by Ms. Black. I was the one chairing the meeting. As soon as quorum was lost, someone moved the we adjourn and that was that. If the government's record was intact and we had not lived through this experience, then maybe we'd be inclined to go along with this proposal. However, I for one cannot, because it would be tantamount to giving the members of the government party veto power. In the absence of a quorum, they could very well say that they don't like the type of presentation or the witness and walk out. If that were to happen, we would be at an impasse. I prefer to stick with the motion as it is now worded.

[*English*]

The Chair: I am going to ask for clarification from the clerk.

Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I recall the situation the day of the meeting when that happened. It wasn't that the government just wanted to walk out. The witnesses were there at the demand of the opposition, who did not have the courtesy of appearing and sitting through the meeting. So there were very few opposition members, who had demanded that these witnesses testify, and in the absence of the opposition, the government members saw fit to adjourn.

The Chair: I think we've heard enough on this. We have the amendment that.... Mr. Coderre.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Claude does have a valid point. Could someone clarify this for me? As far as the quorum is concerned, can we draw a distinction between the start of the meeting, and situations where members walk out? If we're talking about a quorum at the start of the meeting, strictly speaking, they can't walk out because they aren't even there. That's a valid point and I would like some clarification, from a procedural standpoint, before I make my final decision.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's what I asked the clerk for. I thought the quorum was necessary to start the hearing but that it could change after the meeting was started.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Lahaie: There have often been requests in the past to be allowed to start a meeting with a reduced quorum. Many times during the course of meetings, someone has taken over for a regular committee member, or some members have had to leave. In such cases, if the quorum is reduced and the committee still wants to continue sitting, then unanimous consent is required.

[*English*]

The Chair: Does that clarify Mr. Coderre's point?

Ms. Black.

Ms. Dawn Black: The point is that one government member could then stop a meeting from taking place by not showing up, or a member could stop a meeting in progress by walking out if someone called "quorum".

I'm absolutely in opposition to this.

The Chair: That would hold true if we were at the minimum quorum and any one of the members walked out. From what I understand, if it drops below that number of three, that's it. It's not one side or the other.

Okay, we're discussing an amendment from Mr. Hawn that four members be present, including one member from each opposition party.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: It's one member from each recognized party.

The Chair: One from each recognized party. Okay, great.

Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I have a point for further clarification. You said that a meeting could continue with unanimous consent if it fell below reduced quorum. Is that what I understood the clerk to say?

•(1615)

The Chair: That's what he said.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: If the government member walked out, could that meeting carry on with the unanimous consent of the remaining members? Then in fact the government member would not terminate that meeting.

Ms. Dawn Black: The government member not showing up would stop the meeting from starting.

The Chair: Technically, you're right. But if those who are left agree to carry on, then it should carry on, if there is unanimous consent.

Ms. Dawn Black: The point, Mr. Chair, is that if the government member does not show up, you can't start the meeting. It's that simple.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Does the government member include the chair?

The Chair: I guess we do need to get some clarification. But I take what the clerk has indicated as being the way it is. If we start the meeting with the reduced quorum, if one of the members leaves and the other members who are left agree unanimously to continue, we can. We're working on that.

The amendment is that a reduced quorum consist of four members, including one member from each recognized party.

(Motion negated)

The Chair: That's defeated. The reduced quorum will remain as it is.

Go ahead.

Hon. Denis Coderre: I have a question on the main motion. We spoke about the amendment, but before we vote on the motion, I have a question.

[Translation]

Does that mean that in the absence of the Chair, there is no quorum? If the Chair isn't present, but three committee members are, including one opposition member and one vice-chair, can the latter substitute for the Chair? He can? Fine then. Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: You have confirmed that? Okay.

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

The Chair: On the distribution of documents: That only the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the committee, and only when such documents exist in both official languages.

I'm sure everybody accepts that.

(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.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Witnesses' expenses: That, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses, not exceeding two representatives per organization—I didn't remember that part—and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the chair.

Okay, we can have two representatives per organization, but if there are any more than that it is at the chair's discretion to include them.

Is there any discussion?

Go ahead, Claude.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: If the Chair decides to invite 10 people from the same organization to testify, can that decision be overturned?

[English]

The Chair: It says “discretion of the chair”, so I'm not sure you can.

That's a good question.

Mr. Claude Bachand: You could?

The Chair: It looks like I could—but I wouldn't.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Claude Bachand: You promise? You promise with your hand on your heart?

The Chair: I'll promise you that I'll never have ten representatives from one organization.

Hon. Denis Coderre: You have a number, say, five maximum.

The Chair: It doesn't say “maximum”, but...

Ms. Dawn Black: He won't be chair long if he does that.

The Chair: There will be one from each recognized party, I'm sure.

We're good with witnesses' expenses, then?

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

The Chair: Staff at in camera meetings: That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person at an in camera meeting.

You've moved that.

Are there any changes?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I have an amendment, Mr. Chair. I'd just like to add that in addition, each party shall be permitted to have one party staff member attend in camera meetings.

• (1620)

Ms. Dawn Black: I second that.

The Chair: Everybody in favour of that?

(Amendment agreed to)

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

The Chair: In camera meeting transcripts: That one copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee.

The one issue that has arisen in the past—and our new clerk isn't with us—is that the media has gone after the clerk to get the minutes. Until those minutes are approved, there's one copy in the....

Oh, these are in camera minutes. The other one dealt with the unapproved minutes of a committee meeting being made available. We just don't do that—until all of you have an opportunity to see the blues.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Notice of motions: That 48 hours' notice be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration; and that the notice of motion be filed with the clerk of the committee and distributed to members in both official languages.

Hon. Denis Coderre: So moved.

The Chair: I think there's general consensus on that one. Good, thank you.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Is there anything else?

Ms. Dawn Black: I ask for your clarification, because I have two motions to bring forward to the committee, and I don't know if they will be considered substantive or not. So if people agree with the motions, perhaps this will be enough; if not, I'll give the 48-hour notice.

The first motion would be to reintroduce the evidence that was heard for our study on post-traumatic stress disorder and the issues of health in the Canadian Forces. Since we did all that work, had all those hearings, and had all that testimony, the next step, of course, was to write our report.

The calling of the election meant that all of the testimony went out the window. So if I have the agreement of everybody around the table, I would move that we reintroduce that evidence, so that we can carry on and finish the business we started in the 39th Parliament and write the report on post-traumatic stress disorder.

Thank you.

The Chair: I apologize again, as I got to the bottom of the second page of routine motions, but now see that there's a third page. So

we'll hold in abeyance your comments, and then I think we'll be able to deal with them.

Ms. Dawn Black: I have another one after that.

The Chair: Oh, good.

Now we go to the allocation of time for witnesses. This is as it was approved the last time. This is just as it was. But I wonder, because the committee composition has been changed....

Mr. Hawn, do you have a suggestion?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: We need an amendment, Mr. Chair, because the makeup of the committee has changed numerically.

In terms of the timing, we're fine with having ten, seven, and five minutes. But the speaking order in the first round should be Liberal, Bloc, NDP, Conservative. Then in the second round, it should alternate between opposition members and government members: Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Conservative. That way, everybody has a kick at....

So the first round would be Liberal, Bloc, NDP, Conservative for seven minutes. And then the second round would be Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Conservative.

The Chair: So what you're doing there is getting all members at the table into the first two rounds.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: As we did last time, we would give everybody a chance to question. If there's time left over, then at the discretion of the committee and the chair, it can be allocated to whomever.

An hon. member: That's great.

The Chair: Is there any change in the third round, or are you just changing up to the second?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I would just strike it all together, frankly, and just go beyond the second round, because everybody will have had a chance to speak at that point. I guess a third round....

The Chair: If the witnesses are kept to ten minutes, and there are two, and then you go into the seven-minute rounds, you can get through three rounds in two hours. Part of it wasn't just thrown wide open. There was an order.

• (1625)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Then I think we're probably back to the first round—Liberal, Bloc, NDP, Conservative.

Mr. Steven Blaney: Or at the will of the chair.

The Chair: But the way it was last time, if we're.... We have one amendment so far as to what it was last time, so if we discuss that amendment and it's either approved or not approved, then we'll be voting on it as the way it was, or as it is amended. The last time, there was a third round put in there—Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, NDP.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: My suggestion would in fact advantage the NDP.

Ms. Dawn Black: Oh, come on; I never got on.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: This way you'd be third in the third round instead of eighth in the third round.

Ms. Dawn Black: The one in front of you? It puts us down at the bottom.

The Chair: No, what he's suggesting is that after the second round, we go back and start over from the top.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: After everyone has spoken, or after everyone has had a chance to speak.

Ms. Dawn Black: You were talking about the third round.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: The third round, yes.

Ms. Dawn Black: We never get to the third round.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: But if we did—

Ms. Dawn Black: Yes, if we did.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: —instead of the third round as proposed here, you would get the third spot on the third round instead of the eighth spot on the third round. Now, whether we get there or not is, you know....

Ms. Dawn Black: Can I ask for some points of clarification?

The Chair: Absolutely.

Ms. Dawn Black: Okay.

So you're suggesting, from what I can understand—you've been talking only in that direction, and I don't mean it as a criticism, but it's been hard to figure out what you've been saying—instead of having a ten-minute first round, you're reducing the time?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: No, no. The witnesses have ten, the first-round questioners have seven, and every other round after that is five. The first round would be in the order as it's shown there—Liberal, Bloc, NDP, Conservative. The second round would go Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Conservative.

Ms. Dawn Black: So you're taking out a Liberal there.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Well, it's because they don't exist....

Ms. Dawn Black: No, I understand; I'm just asking if you're changing that.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Yes. I'm just changing it to reflect the makeup.

So everybody will then have spoken at the end of the second round. My suggestion for the third round, if we ever get to a third round, is that we just go back to the order of the first round—Liberal, Bloc, NDP, Conservative.

Mr. Steven Blaney: That's good for you.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Yes, if we ever get there, it's good for you.

Mr. Claude Bachand: It's very, very generous.

Ms. Dawn Black: Yeah, right.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Dawn Black: So you're saying it's seven minutes of questioning in the first round, and when it's a minister it's ten. In the second round, it's five minutes, and the third round, five minutes. And you would add a Conservative at the bottom of the second round and drop a Liberal. Is that right?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Yes.

Ms. Dawn Black: What would be the order in the third round?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: It would go back to how it is in the first round—Liberal, Bloc, NDP, Conservative. So that gives the opposition more kicks at the cat. We don't normally get to a third round anyway, I agree, but....

The Chair: Everybody clear?

Ms. Dawn Black: That's fine.

The Chair: Any discussion?

Mr. Coderre.

Hon. Denis Coderre: We can always split during the first round so that people can have more time.

I don't see any problem with how it is. I think we should stick to that and move on.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Except we do have to take out a Liberal for a Conservative.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Why?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: So that every member of the committee gets to ask questions before anybody asks twice.

Hon. Denis Coderre: So you split your time.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: No, no—

Hon. Denis Coderre: Frankly, I believe it's going well that way. We want to keep it as is.

An hon. member: He wants double time.

The Chair: Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Chair, that is patently not correct. I'm just surprised that....

For the second round, the principle in the committee is that every member gets to question before anybody else questions twice. That doesn't count splitting. You can do whatever you want—anybody can do whatever they want—with their time. But every member gets to speak, in that order, so that assuming everybody takes their question time, every member of the committee has gotten to ask questions before anybody else gets a second kick at the cat.

That's what was accepted last time. The makeup of the committee has changed by one. There's one less Liberal, one more Conservative. It makes perfect sense to do it that way.

The Chair: Thank you.

The amendment is that the last spot in the second round be a Conservative spot, not a Liberal spot. And then after the second round is completed, we go right back to the top on five-minute rounds and start over. The present third-round system is gone.

We're going to vote on that. I think everybody has had an opportunity to say what they wanted.

Ms. Dawn Black: I just want to understand the rationale for this again. What you're trying to achieve is an opportunity for every member of the committee to sign on—

•(1630)

The Chair: To have a time slot....

Ms. Dawn Black: —to have an opportunity to speak in order. And you're attempting to do this by the numbers in the House of Commons?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: The numbers on the committee. Every committee member.

Ms. Dawn Black: But you know that the third round never comes.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: It has occasionally. If it did, every committee member should get to speak or question. That's fair, that's logical.

Ms. Dawn Black: It's a partisan system of parties so that representatives—

Mr. Laurie Hawn: But it reflects the House, it reflects the committee. That's the way it is done. If there is a third round, then it advantages the Bloc and the NDP.

The Chair: All right, I think we're getting to it.

So at the end of the second round, eleven spots have been taken up, and you're suggesting there will be three Liberal spots, two Bloc spots, one NDP spot, and five Conservative spots. So that gets everybody who's sitting at this table a chance for input before we start the third round, and that's what you're saying. Okay?

(Amendment agreed to)

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

Mr. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, may I just say it's good that you have this list of routine motions. And I would suggest to the subcommittee on agenda and procedure to call Mr. Laurie Hawn to the first meeting, because he will bring his experience, his skill, his knowledge, his wisdom, and his nice style.

The Chair: Thanks for that.

We've agreed as a committee to deal with the routine motions. Is there a willingness to go any further?

We have a request from Ms. Black to deal with her motions. Are we willing to do that? I'm not saying we're going to deal with them; we'll just listen to what she has to say.

Ms. Dawn Black: Okay. I've said it already and I don't need to repeat it. We had the study on post-traumatic stress disorder. I would like to move a motion to reintroduce that evidence so we can finish that work by writing a report.

Thank you.

The Chair: Is the committee willing to waive the 48 hours' notice to deal with this?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Dawn Black: And my second motion?

The Chair: Let's just deal with this.

It's moved by Ms. Black and reads:

That the Committee resume its study on health services provided to Canadian Forces personnel with an emphasis on post-traumatic stress disorder started in the previous session, and that the evidence and documentation received by the committee during the second session of the 39th Parliament on the subject be taken into consideration by the committee in this session.

This puts it into the realm of the steering committee. This is saying what our committee is going to be doing henceforth; I think that's a steering committee function, but that's my opinion.

We have Mr. Hawn and then Mr. Coderre.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: For clarification, the word is "resume". We're in favour of just reintroducing the evidence, completing the report, not starting it up all over again. The wording says "resume".

Ms. Dawn Black: I just think it can be dealt with today. I don't know that it would have to go through the steering committee if there is an agreement.

The Chair: Mr. Coderre, you're on now. Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre: We're jumping the gun here. As I see it, the steering committee needs to meet first before we can start talking about an agenda. I'd like to suggest to my colleague that he move his motions at this time, given the 48-hour rule. I think we're getting ahead of ourselves. We can't discuss specific issues until the steering committee has had an initial meeting. In any event, some recommendations will come out of that meeting and we can discuss motions at the same time. We were discussing procedural motions, not substantive ones.

I move that the committee now adjourn.

[*English*]

The Chair: Just a second.

Mr. Blaney, do you have a comment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven Blaney: Even though Ms. Black is a member, the new members of the steering committee might like to hear the suggestions of committee members. That would be interesting and most useful, in my view. It might help shed light on and help us complete the work already undertaken by the committee. This extremely interesting motion warrant our consideration, in my estimation.

Thank you.

● (1635)

[*English*]

The Chair: I know we're going to get this opened up, but I am leaning to agreement with Denis.

Ms. Black is withdrawing her motion. She'll bring it to the subcommittee.

Ms. Dawn Black: I'll do it the other way, but I also have another one that I want clarification on, just to understand whether it does need 48 hours or what the process should be.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: On a point of order, I just want to make sure I have the correct sequence here. Ms. Black asked for unanimous consent to waive the 48 hours' notice. We agreed. We listened to her. Then she was ready to put down a motion and we were ready to vote. Explain to me procedurally how we're reversing our original unanimous consent.

The Chair: We agreed to let her propose a motion, but the motion is put in such a way, exactly as Denis said, that it's putting the cart before the horse. This is something that should be dealt with at the steering committee. Ms. Black has agreed and has withdrawn her motion.

Ms. Dawn Black: I'm not proposing a motion here. I'm asking for clarification.

The Chair: Do you want clarification on something else? Okay, let's go.

Ms. Dawn Black: Thank you.

I know that the government is in a bit of a crunch now on the estimates. I will propose, in whatever way it needs to be proposed, that the estimates be examined by this committee and that the minister and his officials be brought to the committee for questioning on the estimates. I know that the government is in a bit of a time crunch on all of this, but I believe it's something that must happen at this committee.

If it's in order, I would propose that today. If it's not in order, I will bring forward the appropriate motion for 48 hours' notice.

The Chair: Is the committee willing to entertain this motion at this time?

Go ahead.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Chair, I think the government whip has talked to all the whips. For the reason Ms. Black mentioned, ministers have been advised that they make themselves available.

I will point out that Minister MacKay is leaving Thursday night for Munich. He will be away until late Sunday night at a NATO

meeting, so obviously this will be Monday afternoon. I would just ask for some consideration of those circumstances at that meeting.

The Chair: I understand that there have been discussions with all the parties, and that in order to get the process finished before the break week, the minister would make himself available if the committee wishes. Mr. Hawn has indicated that. A motion has been proposed to bring him and the officials in to speak to the estimates. The only time that can happen would be Monday, because this all has to be done by Wednesday.

Ms. Dawn Black: That's why I'm putting it out here today. I know you're in a crunch. I'm a kind person.

The Chair: So we're going to have one meeting before we have the steering committee. We know that.

Ms. Dawn Black: So I don't need to do anything else around the estimates if it's going to happen.

Thank you.

The Chair: That's what I understand.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: So why is it—

The Chair: The clerk has indicated that it's in order, I believe.

Are all in favour of having the minister at Monday's meeting?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Will somebody move to adjourn?

An hon. member: I do.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're adjourned.

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