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Thursday, June 16, 2011

—
Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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•(0855)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Miriam Burke): Members of the committee, I see a quorum.

Good morning. We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party.

[Translation]

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

[English]

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): I would nominate Dean Allison for chair, please.

The Clerk: It's moved by Mr. Schellenberger that Mr. Allison be elected as chair of the committee.

[Translation]

Are there any further motions?

[English]

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: Before inviting the chair to take the chair, if the committee wishes we'll now proceed to the election of vice-chairs.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): I would like to propose that Hélène Laverdière be the vice-chair for our committee.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Dewar that Madame Laverdière be elected first vice-chair of the committee.

[Translation]

Are there any further motions?

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Is this for first vice-chair?

The Clerk: Yes.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Madame Laverdière duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

The Clerk: Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

[English]

I am now prepared to receive a motion for second vice-chair.

Mr. Dechert.

Mr. Bob Dechert: I'd like to propose Dominic LeBlanc as second vice-chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Dechert that Mr. LeBlanc be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

[Translation]

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

[English]

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Monsieur LeBlanc duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: I now invite Mr. Allison to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): What we'll do now is look at our routine motions. I know you have a list before you, so I'm going to start with the first page of the principal routine motions. If we could look at those and start moving through them, that would be great. There are other routine motions that were adopted by the 40th Parliament and we'll have a look at them after we've done the principal routine motions.

Why don't we start with the first one: 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 it in its work.

May I have someone move that, please? Okay, Mr. Dechert.

Is there any discussion?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): I would like to mention a small detail. In French, I think it should read "de la présidence", rather than "de la présidente".

[English]

The Chair: Okay. If there are no more comments, I'll put the question.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We'll move forward.

The second motion is that a subcommittee on agenda and procedure be established and composed of the chair, two vice-chairs, and a parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Dechert.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Chair, I'd like to propose an amendment to the wording to say that the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be composed of five members, including the chair, two vice-chairs, and the two parliamentary secretaries.

There's a parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs and a parliamentary secretary for international cooperation.

The Chair: That's the amendment on the floor. Is there any discussion?

Go ahead, Paul.

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's a departure from past practice. One concern we might have is in terms of what the business is of the steering committee, and to have certainly a representative from each party. I was going to move an amendment following Mr. Dechert's intervention that instead of having the vice-chairs, to have representatives of the parties there. It would be the choice of the parties that are represented on the committee. It seems to be a little top-heavy for a steering committee. The idea of the steering committee is to be focused.

I also note there is concern around the business of committees being independent from the other operations. If we go back to the 1980s and the McGrath committee, the recommendations questioned whether parliamentary secretaries should be on committees for reasons that are quite obvious. Committees need to be independent from cabinet, etc. There needs to be a voice that is clearly independent, notwithstanding obviously that government members will bring forward the government agenda.

I'm not sure what the rationale is for having a top-heavy steering committee. I don't think it would be helpful in terms of the committee. I think it raises concerns around the independence of the committee.

● (0900)

The Chair: Is there any response to that?

Mr. Dechert.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Chair, it's our submission that given that there are two somewhat related but in many ways different areas of subject matter for this committee, one being the broader foreign affairs field and the other being the international cooperation field, there may be studies and other matters the committee will deal with that would flow from either of those two departments in the government. For that reason, we think it would be beneficial for the committee to have one or the other of the two parliamentary secretaries there, depending on what's being proposed for the committee to study.

Also, we believe it fairly reflects the results of the most recent election.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Mr. Paul Dewar: To get a better idea of the motivation for this, Bob mentioned that the government wants parliamentary secretaries to be involved in steering. I get that, if that's the case, but I might not like it.

I'm wondering if there's a way to keep it as a tight formation that we wouldn't have too big a steering committee, and I'm wondering if we could go back. There is the chair, who obviously is a government member. There are representatives from two opposition parties. We don't make binding decisions at steering committee; it's simply to map out what to bring to committee. Let's be clear about that. I believe any concern the government might have or expertise from the parliamentary secretaries certainly could be communicated by the representative. Indeed, I'm not objecting to having a parliamentary secretary. If we had the language that there be a representative from the respective parties, which I was going to recommend, maybe that would be a compromise.

My concern, frankly, is that we don't get too top-heavy in the composition in terms of numbers. What Mr. Dechert has proposed is a fairly sound argument in terms of having input, but I don't see why that requires more members. I think that could be done through regular communication, and certainly the government has full access to the resources to make sure that's done. I underline the point that we have a chair who's from the government, and that the composition of the steering committee will be well representative of the interests of government, noting that you are very objective and fair, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: All right. Are there any other comments?

I'm going to call the question on the amendment then.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Could we have it read again so we're clear on what we are voting on?

The Chair: Bob, would you read it again?

Mr. Bob Dechert: The motion is that the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be composed of five members, including the chair, the two vice-chairs, and the two parliamentary secretaries.

The Chair: We have changed the routine motion to add two instead of one parliamentary secretary.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Okay.

We're going to move to the next routine motion.

Go ahead.

● (0905)

Mr. Paul Dewar: If I may, Chair, I was hoping we could have an amendment, as I was inferring, that instead of having two vice-chairs, we would have representatives from each of the parties on the committee.

We just went over it with the government side. If we can just decide from each party who is going to be on the steering committee.... I would like to amend the amended motion to allow that it be composed of the chair and, as amended, one representative from each of the opposition parties.

The Chair: Just to be clear, the chairs represent the opposition party. Are you suggesting additional members on top of that?

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, just one representative from each of the opposition parties, instead of the vice-chairs.

The Chair: Hold on a second here.

Mr. Goldring, and then Mr. LeBlanc.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): I am kind of combining this in two questions.

With all due regard and congratulations to the member of the Bloc who is present here, this follows through to the definition and making clear the other motions here too. When we're talking about members of the opposition parties, are we talking about the recognized opposition parties? Furthermore, I'd like to have it clarified in the rules here that when we have people sitting in on these committee meetings...are the rules to allow any members from the non-recognized opposition parties, the Green Party or the Bloc party, to be in attendance at these meetings?

Some of these meetings are in camera. Some of these meetings have witnesses who are appearing here. With all due respect to the Bloc Québécois member here, what are the rules and understanding for this?

The Chair: Just to be clear, we passed the motion. It is two vice-chairs, which includes the two official parties, and if one of them cannot make it, by all means, you can send a substitute. So the parties will be represented.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Chair, if I may, what I'm looking at is to have some flexibility for the opposition parties and who the representatives are, and that wouldn't necessarily be the vice-chairs.

The Chair: That's correct. You can substitute a person. That's not a problem.

Mr. Paul Dewar: We've done that in the past. I'm just looking at the language here.

The Chair: We'll make sure we operate the same way. There is no problem at all. If you can't make it, Mr. Dewar, you can send a substitute to the steering committee.

We're going to go to the next routine motion: 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 a member of the opposition and a member of the government, but when travelling outside the parliamentary precinct, that the meeting begin after 15 minutes regardless of members present.

Is there any discussion on that?

Can I have someone move that?

Mr. Bob Dechert: I will ask a question, Mr. Chair. Are you referring to the subcommittee on agenda and procedure?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Okay. Before we move on, could I just suggest that we clarify that each member is allowed to bring one assistant to the meeting of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure, and each party would be allowed to have a staff member from a House officer, in other words, the whip, I think?

The Chair: Just a second, Bob. That may be on the second page.

It's on the list, Bob, so we'll get to that.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Also, there's quorum with respect to the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. Will we deal with that as well?

The Chair: Let's deal with the quorum. Anything we haven't dealt with after our routine motions, we'll add. How does that sound?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Okay.

The Chair: All right. I'm going back to what I just read about quorum. Are there any questions about quorum for the main committee in receiving evidence?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Keep it as is. That would be fine.

Could you read it?

•(0910)

The Chair: Yes, most definitely: 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 a member of the opposition and a member of the government, but when travelling outside the parliamentary precinct, that the meeting begin after 15 minutes, regardless of members present.

Can we have someone move that?

Okay, Mr. Dechert.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one we're going to look at says that witnesses be given ten minutes to make their opening statement; that, at the discretion of the chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated ten minutes for the first questioner of each party when a minister appears before the committee and seven minutes for the other meetings; and that thereafter five minutes be allocated to each subsequent questioner, alternating between government and opposition parties.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Chair, I'd like to propose a different proviso for rounds of questioning. I'd like to suggest that round one—

The Chair: Do you have copies that could be handed out?

A voice: I'll give you mine, Chair.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Where's the template from the PMO?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Dechert.

Mr. Bob Dechert: What I would like to propose for rounds of questions is as follows. For round one, it would be the government for seven minutes, the NDP for seven minutes, and the Liberals for seven minutes. For round two, it would be the government for five minutes, the NDP for five minutes, and the government for five minutes. Round three would be the government for five minutes, the NDP for five minutes, and the government for five minutes. Round four would be the government for five minutes and the NDP for five minutes.

The Chair: Okay. That is the proposal. That's the motion.

Is there any discussion?

Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Going back to past practice, certainly round one typically was for opposition. I put that out there as perhaps a suggestion for a change.

For round three, I see where we have the government, the opposition, and the government. Round four goes to the government and then the opposition. So what you have, in effect, if time permits, is back-to-back government in rounds three and four.

If you're not open to a suggestion of changing round one, which I will leave to you.... You're open...?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Yes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Perhaps we could look at the change to rounds three and four, back to back. Instead of having government and government, we'd have government and opposition.

The Chair: Are you suggesting that for round four we switch the NDP and the government as a possible solution?

Mr. Paul Dewar: I have two suggestions. One is to have the opposition first in round one, as was past practice, when we did this before, Chair. Round four would just flip between opposition and government.

•(0915)

The Chair: That's on the table. We'll continue.

Mr. LeBlanc.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Chair, perhaps the clerk or somebody else can answer this. When Mr. Dechert read his motion, it's obvious that in the normal rotation—assuming everybody uses his or her time—there would be one opportunity for the Liberal member to question. In the previous committee, did the NDP routinely get two rounds of questioning, or were they restricted to only one as well?

The Chair: They had one, and if there was time, we always tried to accommodate.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: But in the motions that were passed at similar meetings like this, in the original rotation they had one slot, and then if there was time at the end....

The Chair: That's correct.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Thank you.

The Chair: Back to you, Mr. Dechert.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Chair, I'd just like to advise that I'm prepared to accept Mr. Dewar's recommendation on round four, to

switch the order to have the NDP go first and the government go second.

The Chair: What about round one? So you're suggesting switching the NDP and the Conservatives?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Right, in both round one and round four.

The Chair: For round one as well?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Just so we're clear, round one would be NDP, Conservative, Liberal; and then it would be Conservative, NDP, Conservative in round two; round three would be Conservative, NDP, Conservative; and round four would be NDP, Conservative, the government. That's the proposal.

Is there any other discussion?

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

The Chair: The next motion I have is that the clerk of the committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the committee and its subcommittees.

Are there any questions about that?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much. We're feeding.

I apologize, because we're working from two sheets here, so I appreciate your patience. If we go back to the principal routine motions, there is a motion that the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents to the members of the committee only when the documents are available in both official languages, and that the witnesses be advised accordingly.

That's the standard routine. Is that all right if we add that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right, thank you. I appreciate you giving me an opportunity to move back and forth.

We're going to move back to the routine motions of the committee of the 40th Parliament. So the next one is that if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation, and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses, not exceeding two representatives per organization, provided that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the chair

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is that unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to have one staff at in camera meetings and that one additional person from each party be allowed to be present.

I think, Mr. Dechert, that goes to your original thought?

Mr. Bob Dechert: It does.

The Chair: All right. Any other comments?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The next one I have here is 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 or their staff.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one is 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; and that for motions requiring 48 hours' notice, the chair be authorized to defer consideration until 15 minutes prior to the adjournment time for the meeting as indicated in the notice of the meeting.

There is another suggestion here that the 48 hours' notice be calculated in the same manner as for the House.

• (0920)

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: That's working days, correct?

The Chair: That's correct.

Is there any discussion?

Go ahead, Paul.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Perhaps we could have a clarification from the clerk, because I don't recall. Is that how the rules were employed in the last Parliament?

The Chair: No, I believe it was 48 hours, but if that is over a weekend and stuff, we're suggesting that we have some understanding for the committee as to when that's going to be.

Go ahead.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Could I ask the clerk for her view on the wording "unless the substantive motion relates directly to the business then under consideration"? Would that be the standard ruling in any event, if that wording weren't there?

The Clerk: No.

The Chair: What's that?

Mr. Bob Dechert: My question is on the wording "unless the substantive motion relates directly to the business then under consideration".

If that language weren't present and a committee member were to move a motion before 48 hours, would it likely be accepted by the chair on the basis that it relates to the matter then under consideration, or is that an extension of the general authority?

The Chair: That's sort of standard. If we're on a topic and someone raises a motion, we can deal with it.

Mr. Bob Dechert: We can under the rules of parliamentary procedure?

The Chair: Right. The point is, if it weren't there you'd need unanimous consent to move forward.

Mr. Bob Dechert: You'd need unanimous consent, but it wouldn't be at the discretion of the chair.

The Chair: That's right.

Paul, do you have a response?

Mr. Paul Dewar: I have another question based on that response.

First of all, I was wondering if for the 48 hours' notice we could tag on "to be calculated in the same manner as for the House". I'm wondering if we could put a timeline on that. This has nothing to do with any political agenda or game. It's actually as a courtesy to the staff that we put it at four o'clock on weekdays and two o'clock on Fridays in terms of calculating the days to get motions in. I'd like some feedback from the clerks on that. They didn't ask for that; we just noticed it. It is difficult for them to have to get translation and everything going. We should be able to adhere to certain timelines during the weekdays and on Fridays as well.

I'm looking for clarification. When we're moving a motion that is relevant to the discussion, I just want to clarify that it's always been done through unanimous consent. If it's on topic, you can move a motion if you have the floor?

The Chair: I don't believe it's ever needed unanimous consent, as long as it's within the area.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I thought I heard unanimous consent.

The Chair: No, that would be if we didn't have this in.

I think a timeline is reasonable just for translation purposes, etc. I think in government operations it's four o'clock.

Mr. Bob Dechert: My only comment is that we had 4 p.m. on one day and 2 p.m. on the other day. That seems a bit confusing to me.

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's just on Fridays because of the short day.

Mr. Bob Dechert: For consistency, can we just make it 4 p.m.?

The Chair: I think four o'clock would be reasonable across the board, because there would still be people working. You're right, though, that Parliament is not in.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Just for clarification, business ends at 2:30 for us in the House on Fridays, so it would be reasonable to have it in by two o'clock on Fridays.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Let's make it simple and say 4 p.m. on any day.

The Chair: I'll reread the motion:

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; and

That for motions requiring 48 hours' notice the chair be authorized to defer consideration until 15 minutes prior to the adjournment time for the meeting, as indicated in the notice of meeting, and that those motions be received no later than 4:00 p.m.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Before I go to the floor, I have two additional motions that will be part of our routine.

The first is that the committee be authorized to purchase documents for the use of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next motion is that the committee be authorized to purchase gifts to be presented to foreign hosts and visiting delegations.

(Motion agreed to)

• (0925)

The Chair: Are there any other thoughts or routine motions?

Mr. Bob Dechert: I guess this isn't a routine motion, but I was going to raise the issue of the constitution of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights.

The Chair: Did you want to move that, Bob?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Yes. I move that, pursuant to Standing Orders 108(1) and 108(2), a Subcommittee on International Human Rights, to be chaired by a member elected by the subcommittee, be established to inquire into matters relating to the promotion of respect for international human rights, as may be referred to it by the committee; that the subcommittee be composed of seven members or associate members, of whom four shall be government members, two shall be NDP members, and one shall be from the Liberal Party, to be named following the usual consultations with the whips; and that the subcommittee be empowered to send for persons, papers, and records, to receive evidence, to sit during a time when the committee is not sitting in Ottawa, to sit when the committee is sitting outside the parliamentary precinct, and to sit during periods when the House stands adjourned; and that the chair of the subcommittee meet with the steering committee of the foreign affairs committee at their mutual discretion.

I'll provide you with this.

The Chair: Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Chair, this is more a comment to government that they seriously consider...because it's really up to you guys if this is going to happen. I think there was a consensus in the last Parliament from the foreign affairs committee, and from all parties, I believe—Chair, you can correct me if I'm wrong—that this actually should be a stand-alone committee, that it should have full standing independent of this committee.

I simply wish to have that conveyed to government. I know that some of the members, Mr. Goldring, Mr. Van Kesteren, and Ms. Brown as well.... We had difficulties, frankly, in having to receive

reports from the subcommittee and essentially having to sign off on them without having been involved.

I think the issue of international human rights is extremely important and deserves separate standing. I don't think this is partisan. It's not political. I think it does reflect the wishes, if I'm not wrong—and others can speak to it—of what we had a consensus on in the previous Parliament in foreign affairs.

I wish that would be conveyed. I would like to note that publicly. Also, perhaps government might respond, maybe not today...if you don't feel comfortable, by all means, I understand. But I think that's a message that should be transmitted and I'd like it to be taken seriously: this subcommittee should be a standing committee. It does substantive work. It's a serious issue. It deserves to have separate standing.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Well, I agree that there is a sense of uncomfortableness to have a report from another committee put before us: do you alter the work of the other committee or do you just stamp it going through? But I also think there's an importance here for the foreign affairs committee in regard to reviewing the report, because it could very well be impacting the work we may be doing on other issues.

So in a sense, I kind of agree, but on the other hand, I think it's important for us as a committee to be presented with it, and to have the opportunity to maybe pass comment on it if there's other work we're doing in conjunction with and at the same time as that report from the committee.

The Chair: Go ahead, Paul.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's a fair comment from Mr. Goldring. I'll just note that I think it would be worthwhile if the government actually looked at other jurisdictions and how it's done. I note that if there are shared interests, committees work together all the time. We're able to do that structurally and functionally. We have shared interests and common concerns, and of course all reports are tabled in Parliament so we have access to them.

So I think it's a fair comment, but I think what we've seen over the last number of years is that with the issues we see in what we have to deal with, and the issues that the subcommittee on human rights sees—there's enough work for everyone—I find it very dysfunctional to have this committee sign off on work that's done by another committee.

Again, I think the concerns Mr. Goldring has are valid, but I think they could be dealt with in a way that would satisfy everyone. Certainly we've noted that with international trade, for instance; we have opportunities to access reports if we have a shared interest. For that matter, there's defence, and if we need to have a joint committee, there are ways of doing that.

• (0930)

Mr. Peter Goldring: Could I pass along an example?

The Chair: One second, Mr. Goldring, I'm going to come back to you.

Mr. LeBlanc.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, I want to support what Mr. Dewar said. Our colleague Irwin Cotler was of the view as well that there may be merit in looking at a separate standing committee, particularly if this committee, as many of us hope, will be active in some foreign policy in international development areas, in order not to shortchange or not to give appropriate attention to the issues. If you look at events in recent months, there is a lot of work in the area of international human rights. I would just suggest that the government consider this, maybe with the whips. I don't know the proper forum where these things would be decided, but my conversation with Mr. Cotler confirms there is a lot of merit in what Paul said, and at the right time and in the right way, if this can be resolved in the fall, or if we can look at this issue again when we've had a chance to talk to our whips, I think there'd be merit in that.

Merci.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I think that by having it come through the foreign affairs committee it gives us that overarching to take a look at the report. I'm thinking back. We've done studies on the Americas and there have been reports coming through from members of the Americas through the subcommittee. I think we could carry this through to Asia and have reports coming through from Asian countries.

For me, I can see the other complication of how to deal with a report. But from the point of view that this is the foreign affairs committee and we do travel to some of these countries and the ministers travel, it is good to have that oversight at least coming through this committee so that we're apprised of the nature and contents of the subcommittee report.

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor, which we haven't passed. We got sidetracked.

Are there any other comments on the motion? It is the one I read 15 minutes ago. We're coming back to it.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Could I hear the language?

The Chair: I will it read again just for clarification:

That, pursuant to Standing Orders 108(1) and 108(2), a Subcommittee on International Human Rights to be chaired by a member elected by the subcommittee, be established to inquire into matters relating to the promotion of respect for international human rights, as may be referred to it by the committee; that the subcommittee be composed of seven members or associate members, of whom four shall be government members and two shall be NDP members, and one shall be from the Liberal Party, to be named following the usual consultations with the whips; that the subcommittee be empowered to send for persons, papers, and records, to receive evidence, to sit during a time when the committee is not sitting in Ottawa, to sit when the committee is sitting outside the parliamentary precinct, and to sit during periods when the House stands adjourned; and that the chair of the subcommittee meet with the steering committee of the foreign affairs committee at their mutual discretion.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That was four, two, and one?

The Chair: That's correct.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes, four, two, one.

The Chair: Is there any other discussion on that?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: My thought is that when we come back in the fall we should have a conversation on whether we send a letter as a formal request. I realize that the government members will talk about it, but we could probably send a formal letter from the committee if that's the desire of the committee.

Is there any other business?

Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: This is just a comment, and hopefully something we can keep in mind. In light of the motion that was passed regarding Libya, and having received assurances from the government about this committee being seized with the situation in Libya—and that goes back to the previous motion, which the House passed in March, and of course the subsequent motion, which the House just passed—it was noted in both motions in the House that this committee be seized with the situation in Libya and that we have requisite oversight.

The issue will be what happens in terms of when the House isn't sitting. I've talked to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and he has agreed there would be full cooperation from government in terms of meeting.

I would put to government and just put it here that there might be a way of coming up with some dates to meet during the summer, and again I'm just putting this to government, and maybe look at a combined meeting with the defence committee. That's something that could be looked at.

I just hope that people are thinking about this. We should be looking at nailing down some dates, because it was very clear in discussions that we wouldn't wait until September to meet with regard to Libya and that we would have some meetings during the summer. I think people have to start looking at their calendars and organizing this. I just wanted to put that on the table for government and my colleagues.

● (0935)

The Chair: All right.

Are there any other comments?

Bob, did you have a question or comment?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Yes. My understanding is that the government is happy to offer informal briefings to any member of the committee as they wish, especially between now and the time the committee resumes in the fall.

Hopefully that will allow you to have the information you need to consider the issues and not require a meeting of the full committee, which of course is costly.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Well, perhaps we need to chat further on this. I think there was an understanding that the foreign affairs committee and the defence committee would be seized with the issue. Certainly it was my understanding that we would meet on these in the interim period—between when the House rises and when we return in September—but alas, that's not your understanding, so perhaps we need to discuss that further.

The Chair: And we could have some conversations after the meeting.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Peter Goldring: With that issue, I would think that we would keep in mind the logistics of it. It's one thing to bicycle over to Parliament Hill, but it's another thing to come by plane for four or five hours. The logistics of it should be considered.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's why I'm raising it now, Peter, exactly for that reason. I mean, I'd be happy to have the committee travel to Edmonton, then.

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*].

Mr. Paul Dewar: Or New Brunswick.

The Chair: Ms. Ayala.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): We have made a decision, as parliamentarians, but we are also responsible for human rights and the rights of these people. I don't care about my vacation. I made a heartbreaking decision. Also I would like to respond to the families of Libya. I've lived under a dictatorship, so I know what it's like. But they have it worse.

Sure, we'll have to make five-hour trips, but there are families and children dying there. We are going to work for them. We have an obligation, not only to Canadians, but also to the people on this planet. We are going to give and show what we, as Canadians, are made of. I think it's key that we be there and that we be at work.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. LeBlanc.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Chair, this has been a productive meeting, I think, and I don't want to prolong it, but Mr. Goldring had asked a question, and in fairness to Mr. Fortin....

[*Translation*]

I'm curious to hear what you have to say, you or the clerk, about how we are going to work with members who have not gone through recognized training in the House.

Personally, I hope they can participate constructively and appropriately in the committee's work. I am sure that this will happen. Some basic rules have been established in the past for members who have not gone through recognized training under the technical rules of the House. What is their level of participation?

[*English*]

The Chair: I think that's a discussion we should have informally, and then we determine.... Certainly any member of Parliament is welcome to sit at the table at any time. In terms of the level of discussion, that's also up to the committee—obviously no votes, but that's not what you're asking.

My suggestion is that we have some conversations about this informally, and then we have a conversation when we sit back at the table in the fall. That's certainly reasonable, I think.

Okay? All right.

Is there any other business?

Thanks, everyone. I know we'll see each other in the House, but have a good summer and we'll talk to you soon.

The meeting is adjourned.

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