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Tuesday, June 21, 2011

—
Chair

Mr. Ed Komarnicki

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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• (1530)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Evelyn Lukyniuk): Honourable members of the committee, good afternoon. I see a quorum.

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can receive motions only for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, cannot entertain points of order, nor participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the selection of the chair. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party. I am ready to receive motions for the position of chair.

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): I move that Ed Komarnicki be nominated as chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Daniel that Mr. Komarnicki be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

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

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Clerk: Before inviting Mr. Komarnicki to take the chair, if the committee wishes, we will proceed to the election of vice-chairs.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

I am now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): I move that Carol Hughes be nominated as first vice-chair.

[Translation]

The Clerk: Moved by Ms. Crowder that Ms. Hughes be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

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

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[English]

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.

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

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): I move that Mr. Cuzner be nominated second vice-chair.

The Clerk: Ms. Hughes moves that Mr. Cuzner be second vice-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. Cuzner duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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

The Chair (Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain)): Can everyone hear me well? There won't be any speeches, but I will call this meeting to order.

I can say that we've done the formal part of the business for which the notice was given, but if we could, we would like to deal with a couple of other matters as well. And if we have agreement of the parties here, I'd first like to ask the analysts to join us at the table if they would.

While they're doing that, there is a set of routine motions that I'd like to circulate to the committee members, and we can go through them one by one and have some discussion.

Perhaps before I do that, as the analysts make their way here, because many of you are new to this committee—in fact it seems that almost everyone is new to this committee—it might be good for the analysts to just give a brief introduction of who they are and a little bit of what they do. Perhaps we can do that straightaway.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

Ms. Chantal Collin (Committee Researcher): My name is Chantal Collin. I am a research analyst with a background in socio-economic policies.

[English]

I work for the Library of Parliament. I am an analyst, and I specialize in socio-economic policies.

I have been with this committee since 2003, so it's a pleasure to see all of you today.

I have distributed a little pamphlet. It's called "Ask the Library". In there you can find information about our services, not only as analysts on the committee but to individual members as well. So if you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us.

I am the lead on the committee, and these are my two colleagues, and I'll let them introduce themselves.

[Translation]

Mr. André Léonard (Committee Researcher): Good afternoon. My name is André Léonard. My training is in economics. I have been working for the Library of Parliament for two years and I have spent the past two years on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. It is a pleasure to be working for this committee. Thank you.

[English]

Ms. Sandra Gruescu (Committee Researcher): Bonjour. Good afternoon.

My name is Sandra Gruescu. I am an analyst too. I am a lawyer by training, specializing mainly in public pensions, the Canada Pension Plan, and the Old Age Security Act, as well as a bit of labour law.

It's a pleasure to be here, and I wish you a good session.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that brief introduction.

These routine motions have been circulated. As you will see, the first order of business was actually appointing the analysts. I've already had them introduced, but perhaps I should have had this motion moved that says 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.

I can certainly say that we've appreciated the services you've given us in the past, and we surely look forward to them in the future.

I would look for a motion to that effect.

• (1535)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): So moved.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Taking it that we can proceed with the suggested routine motions, the second one deals with the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. Perhaps you could take the opportunity to look through that. Essentially, it provides for five members on the

agenda and procedure subcommittee. It would be the chair, the two vice-chairs we have, the parliamentary secretary, and a member of the Conservative Party. Then it talks about quorum and the fact that each can have one assistant and one staff member from a House officer attend the meetings.

There are probably some questions or discussion.

Jean.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Yes, I have a couple of questions.

In the past the subcommittee had four members. That's been the past practice for this committee. I just wondered why there was the increase.

The second thing is that on the quorum of the subcommittee, where it says that it shall consist of three members, it actually doesn't specify that one of those members must be from the opposition. So technically, if you end up going with the five members, it could end up being three Conservatives for quorum. I don't think that's reasonable. It should actually include at least a member of the opposition.

The Chair: Are you done? Do you have anything further?

Ms. Jean Crowder: No, I don't on that motion.

The Chair: On a procedural point, in the past we didn't necessarily have a parliamentary secretary on the committee. But it is useful to have a parliamentary secretary because of the connection to the minister. One other member, I guess, is to allow for the members who have been appointed more recently.

That's just a comment. Somebody else may have a comment. The fact that one of the three members....

At least one opposition member is what you are suggesting you'd like to see there. Maybe it's a valid suggestion.

Is there any other discussion?

Go ahead, Brad.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Sorry, Mr. Chair, I don't think I indicated who the fifth member would be. I want to nominate Mr. McColeman to be the fifth member of that committee.

The fact that the two vice-chairs of the committee are opposition members would ensure that there is representation on the subcommittee of both the recognized opposition parties in the House. So I'm not quite sure what the concerns of my colleague across the way are. As far as I'm concerned, every party would be represented at the subcommittee.

The Chair: That's a fair point.

Before we accept that motion, we'll deal with this one. We'll come back to a motion to actually appoint the specific member.

He makes a fair point. He indicates that by virtue of the two vice-chairs, you will have members from the opposition on the committee.

Go ahead, Jean.

Ms. Jean Crowder: My comment is on the quorum part of this, that the quorum of the subcommittee shall consist of at least three members. It does not say “one of which should be an opposition member”.

The subcommittee itself, yes, has representation. But when you look at the quorum part of it, it doesn't require that there be representation from the opposition, which I think is pretty standard practice.

The Chair: Yes, and it may be a fair point. You have the chair, and you could have the parliamentary secretary. And if Mr. McColeman happened to be the third one, you'd have three Conservatives. You're saying that you would like to entertain a friendly amendment that would allow for one of those members in the quorum to be from the opposition.

Are there any thoughts on that?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: That's fine. We'll accept that.

The Chair: We'll have it amended to read “one of which shall be a member of the opposition”.

With that amendment, is there any further discussion?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: It would be that one would be a member of an opposition party.

The Chair: Ms. Crowder, is that what you've said?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Yes.

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

The Chair: That takes care of item two.

Item three has to do with meeting without a quorum. You can just read through it. This primarily deals with receiving evidence particularly when you have witnesses “provided that at least four members are present, including one member from each recognized party”. So that would sort of address your concerns.

The second paragraph reads:

In the case of previously scheduled meetings taking place outside the parliamentary precinct, the committee members in attendance shall only be required to wait for 15 minutes following the designated start of the meeting before they may proceed to hear witnesses and receive evidence, regardless of whether opposition or government members are present.

I would only assume that if you have a meeting outside of Ottawa and the witnesses attend but the members don't, you will still proceed with hearing the evidence.

Can I get a mover for that motion?

That is moved by Colin Mayes.

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

The Chair: Let's go to number four.

Now, this one is always a bit interesting. I'll maybe preface with some of my own remarks. I know there have been some discussions as well on this one, which has to do with the time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses.

It begins as follows: “That the witnesses from any one organization shall be allowed five to ten minutes, at the discretion of the chair, to make their opening statements”.

My view would be that if we had two panels in one hour, we would probably limit the witnesses to five minutes. But if we had one panel for a whole hour, we'd probably go with the ten minutes, and then something in between if it seemed necessary.

It goes on to say:

During the questioning of witnesses there shall be five minutes allocated to each questioner; and that the order of questions for the first and subsequent rounds of questioning shall be as follows:

That would be Conservative, NDP, Conservative, NDP, Conservative, and Liberal, and equally at five minutes.

I would entertain a mover and a seconder for that motion, and then we can have a discussion.

That is moved by Phil, seconded by Brad.

Is there any discussion?

Carol, and then I think Jean is next.

• (1540)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Certainly we have some concerns with respect to this motion.

The first part, although it says at the discretion of the chair, and you're indicating that it is depending on how many witnesses there are, that statement is not in here. Depending on who the chair is, when it says it's at the discretion of the chair, they'll make it the way they want. So I think we need to be a little bit clearer on that part, if that is the intent; otherwise, we will leave it at ten minutes.

The other part I'm concerned about is with respect to the changes that are actually occurring here. In the past we've had seven minutes. Our position is that we would like to stay with the seven minutes.

The other part I have some concerns about, or I don't agree with, is that the Conservative Party should go first. In previous committees it's always been that the opposition goes first, and then it goes to the next. So I would prefer that we stay with the status quo from before.

Thank you.

The Chair: Jean.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I agree with Carol. I think it's problematic to have witnesses come for just five minutes. I know you and I had chatted about it briefly. Many times witnesses travel from a great distance. I know there's an opportunity for them to provide briefing notes in advance, with sufficient notice, but we all know that sometimes witnesses are scheduled fairly tightly before the meeting and there often isn't time for them to submit their documents in sufficient time to have them translated into both official languages.

And when we bring people here and just give them five minutes to speak, particularly when they've travelled from a distance, I know that in other committees I've been on it's been problematic. Even when we have several witnesses and we only give them five minutes, it's very difficult for the chair, as well, to keep them to five minutes if it's on complex issues.

I know there could be occasions when we want to keep them to five minutes, but I think the general rule would serve us better at ten, to allow them to fully present their case or their particular point of view.

On the questioning round, again, it's the same piece. On all committees I've served on their initial practice has been a seven-minute round on the first go-round, and then a five-minute round on the second. Again, that seven-minute round allows you time to fully explore an issue with a witness, which is very difficult to do in five minutes.

I think it's to the committee's benefit to have as much time as possible with the witnesses before us to really explore some of these issues.

● (1545)

The Chair: Okay. You raised some good points.

I'll just indicate that there's something behind this. I know that in human resources we've had times when we had one panel in one hour, and certainly everybody had an opportunity to question. At times there were a lot of people who wanted to come into the hearing, but we had only a limited number of meetings, so we've had two panels of witnesses. What happens in that case, where you constrain the time to five minutes for the witnesses, is it gives more members an opportunity to question.

Now, when you have one panel in two hours, it gives a lot more time and the seven minutes is a little easier to administer and everybody gets an opportunity to speak. That was somewhat the reasoning behind that.

I know we've had some discussion about that, but before we turn it over to some other comments, I see Rodger had a comment as well. We might as well hear you on this too.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): This will be my fifth Parliament. I've sat on all those seats over there, sat in the first three up here, sat in that seat, sat down in those seats. This is the first time in this seat, but, like they say, there's not a bad seat in the House. I'll grow into this role, I'm sure.

But as was mentioned before—and it's in our hands anyway, we can do as we please as a committee—traditionally the official opposition does start off the first round of questioning. I look back at my first Parliament, the 37th Parliament, where we had the Bloc, and, before the merger, the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives. In the first round there was a full seven minutes given to each. The rotation would have been Canadian Alliance, Bloc, Liberal, NDP, Progressive Conservative. Everybody was included in the first round.

I think the official opposition should probably start the first round, and then the government after that. The seven minutes for the first round makes sense. In any committee work that I've done to date seven minutes works best.

From our perspective, I'm hoping there's some generosity on the part of those around today. If we might be able to get included in the first round that would be great, but certainly we would hope to be included by the second round anyway.

The Chair: Just so you know, Rodger, the way it's set up here is if you go for five minutes—and let's talk about one hour for one panel, as opposed to two hours—in the one hour, you would have five minutes. It would go in the order as you see it. It would be Conservative, NDP, Conservative, NDP, Conservative, Liberal. That would be the first round. You would always get that in. So you'd have five minutes. If you went to a longer term, obviously you would keep repeating the rounds in that fashion. You would always be up on the first round, especially if the witnesses were 15 minutes and 30 is 45, in the hour, and you'd keep going.

The way this was designed is that essentially the Conservatives get about 50% of the time and they have 53% of the seats, almost 54%. The NDP gets 33.4% of the time. The NDP has 33% of the seats. The Liberal Party would get 16% of the time although the Liberals have 11% of the seats.

It generally gives everybody more or less their distribution. Everybody speaks in the first round and then starts the second round. In the hour, that works fine. For the two-hour panel there may be some merit to the seven-minute idea.

I'll turn it over to Phil, because we talked about that. You raised an issue about seven minutes, five minutes. Phil, give us your thoughts. We talked about it, so maybe you would want to add to this conversation.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Yes, we did, Mr. Chair. The distinction here is between a one-hour meeting and a two-hour meeting. A lot of us who were on other committees in the last Parliament were used to the normal practice of two-hour meetings, but in discussion with the chair, as the former parliamentary secretary apparently in this committee, it actually can break down into two one-hour sessions. You'd have three witnesses and then they would be removed and three new witnesses would come forward.

In the thinking of five minutes, it was all around that one-hour scenario where we had two separate groups presenting for an hour. That is how we came up with the five to ten minutes, first of all, as presenters to make sure as many members could ask those questions as well. It gave the chair that discretion.

Also, I put together another proposal which we discussed. I'll pass it around. This motion as revised would allow for seven minutes for questions in a full panel discussion for two hours. If we have a full panel for two hours, we move to seven minutes for questioning. That accommodates getting around the table, the principle being every member at this table should be able to ask questions in any of our meetings. We should try to get through all of the group.

If I passed this proposal around, Mr. Chair, would that be appropriate?

● (1550)

The Chair: Sure, it would be appropriate to pass it around and let everybody have a look at it.

While he's doing that, what it does is if we had the two hours, everybody would get on in the first round at seven minutes. It would just continue in the same fashion, round after round, until we were done. You'd get at least two rounds plus some more. In the one-hour session you wouldn't complete two rounds.

Of course, in the two-hour session it would be my view that the witnesses should be given a little more time. In the one-hour session they should be constrained somewhat in time to give more opportunity for questions.

Although that's been the practice, we might want to move to one panel for two hours, if we have the time for that, to give more time for questioning. There is nothing to prevent us from doing that.

Does everybody have a copy of the new motion?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, I would add to that. Relying on your experience from the last Parliament, to give the committee members a sense of it, were there more one-hour two-panel meetings than two-hour sessions? How did that break down?

The Chair: It seemed toward the end we were doing a lot of legislation, private members' bills. There were other subject areas we were looking at. There were more witnesses who wanted to testify than we had room for. We decided to double up on the panels, which had its negatives, but it had its positives as well, in the sense that more people could actually express themselves before the committee.

Toward the end we increased them, but everything being equal, if we had the time, I think we would do one panel for two hours.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Okay, there is a preference, a kind of tradition in the committee that if there is the time, we do the two-hour meetings. That is what most of us on other committees have experienced.

The Chair: There is also the complexity of the issue as well. You would try to balance that.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Yes. This is written kind of backwards from the way it was written originally, because it refers to the seven minutes in the first part. That's typically with a panel that's with us for two hours. Then we would move to five minutes, which is on page 2, when we break it into two one-hour sessions. That's the distinction.

The Chair: I think Kellie has a point, and I'm going to suggest that if we are getting some consensus we might withdraw the motion and proceed with the second. But before we do that I guess there are more speakers.

Jean, you had some comments.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Just again about the speaking order, in fact that speaking order doesn't actually give everybody an opportunity to speak. It gives each party an opportunity to speak but not every member.

That's the rationale for it, the order that used to be used with the official opposition and the opposition parties and then the Conservatives and then the five-minute round. In fact if you do the traditional speaking order that many committees have had, you would have had three people speak at seven minutes each and then you go into the five-minute round.

The Chair: That would be quite disproportionate according to the seats in the House, which is the new reality. So this is closer.

Ms. Jean Crowder: The previous committees also did not reflect the percentage of seats in the House.

The Chair: They tried to, I suppose.

Ms. Jean Crowder: It was just a mechanism that was used. It's fairly traditional. I have sat on three or four committees now, and that's typically what happens.

I do certainly like the proposal around at least a seven-minute round, because if you're talking about quality versus quantity, which is really what we're trying to get here, we want to make sure people have enough time to flesh out the idea, which would reflect the quality of it.

Most of the committees I've sat on have had two-hour meetings. Rarely did we have a panel in for one hour unless there were lots of people coming in as witnesses. Then what we often did was the chair would ask the group if we could agree on a five-minute round when we had one hour. Almost without exception we would agree to that.

• (1555)

The Chair: I'm not so sure you're going to get a whole lot of movement on changing the order of things, but the five or seven minutes maybe. But I'll leave that to the rest of the members.

Kellie.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: I have just a few things. First off, I guess in order to move this forward, we're very comfortable moving the first Conservative member to the end, so it would be NDP, Conservative, NDP, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative on the five-minute round for the hour sessions. It would just be taking the first person and moving them to the last, and that would be for the five-minute rounds and also the seven-minute rounds.

The Chair: Rodger's going to be happy with that.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: I'm so excited. I just want to follow you every time, Rodger.

We're comfortable with that. But I do think just from the standpoint of trying to have as many members of the entire committee have an opportunity to speak as possible, if we're going to have one-hour rounds we should stick to the five minutes and if we're going to go to the two-hour rounds then we would do seven minutes. It would give every member an opportunity in doing two-hour rounds to actually have more time to formulate a question and do things. That's the position we're putting forward.

The Chair: What I'm going to suggest is that the first motion number 4 be withdrawn and that the second motion number 4 be put on the table with an amendment in both the five- and seven-minute rounds to make the last member in the round Conservative, and Liberal just before that.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: So the amendment would be that the speaking order would change to NDP, Conservative, NDP, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative.

The Chair: Right. Then we'll have discussion on this new motion as amended.

Carol, did you have a comment, or was it Jean?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: It was me.

I think I would also want this to be a little bit more substantive and say that the witnesses from any one organization shall be allowed five minutes when it is a one-hour meeting and ten minutes when it is a two-hour meeting.

The Chair: I'm sure I'll exercise my discretion wisely, but you're saying it might not be me. It does give you the opportunity, and I'm sure some of that would be just using logic, as you might have to improvise and have seven minutes at some point because of something. I don't know that you want to constrict the chair. Of course if discretion weren't exercised properly, the committee could amend this at its pleasure.

If you want to propose an amendment, you are welcome to, but it's not likely to sell.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: I would hope that the chair will be impartial in some way.

The Chair: Of course.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: We have to give some thought, as my colleague has indicated here, to the fact that when people come they do travel from afar. And sometimes you're just starting to get into your speech and the time is gone and a lot of the meat is just not there.

We are talking about a committee that deals with various issues here, and I think it's important, if we are going to invite witnesses here, that they be allowed to speak. At the same time, it allows us to build our questioning, aside from what is provided to us and aside from some of the research we're doing. So a lot of our questions often come from the testimony itself.

I think it is reasonable to indicate that if we're having two-hour meetings, we ask for ten-minute speeches.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are you going to move that as an amendment?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: I am moving it as an amendment.

Thank you very much.

(Amendment negatived)

The Chair: We'll go back to the main motion.

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

The Chair: You're not totally happy, but some accommodation was made, and that's good.

The other thing we should say, and the clerk was just sharing with me, is that witnesses are asked to bring their briefs with them and circulate them to the parties, etc., so that's somewhat helpful.

Moving to document distribution, that is pretty much straightforward. All documents, including motions, must be in both official languages and witnesses shall be advised of this requirement. And we must ensure they are, because many times they come in and they don't know or they forget, so it would be a good thing to double-remind them.

This is moved by Brad.

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

The Chair: Moving to working meals, we have a committee that sits from 4:30 to 5:30. I'm not sure what that means, but it says:

That the committee hereby authorize the clerk of the committee, in consultation with the chair, to make the necessary arrangements to provide for working meals,

as may be required, and that the cost of these meals be charged to the committee budget.

Brad moves that.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Travel, accommodation, and living expenses of witnesses:

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 made at the discretion of the chair.

One is probably sufficient. Two is maybe....

You don't like the discretion of the chair, Rodger, or what?

• (1600)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: You can go ahead, Ms. Crowder.

The Chair: I'm sorry.

Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: What two things—

The Chair: Did we have a mover for this motion, the travel?

Yes, okay, Brad.

Now we can have some discussion.

Ms. Jean Crowder: It's not that I disagree with the motion. I think sometimes two representatives are required when somebody needs an attendant or sometimes when there's an elder coming before a committee.

The Chair: So what are you saying?

Ms. Jean Crowder: I agree with the two representatives, but I wonder if we could add "if requested, reasonable child care expenses".

Particularly with this committee, where we're part of HRSDC—

The Chair: Including child care expenses.

Ms. Jean Crowder: It's been fairly standard on many committees to have that added in there.

The Chair: It seems reasonable.

Mr. Brad Butt: That's a reasonable thing. It's a fair amount.

The Chair: We don't see any objection.

We'll probably get an amendment to that, but we'll have more discussion.

I think it was Rodger who was next.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: No, I'm okay.

The Chair: You're okay.

Who is next?

Carol.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: I'm just wondering. Aside from child care, dealing with this committee here, sometimes some of the witnesses may have to leave someone at home who cannot be cared for unless there is somebody there. So I would like to include attendant care in there as well, if possible.

As an example, I have a friend who has a husband with MS who is a quadriplegic, and her son is autistic. If she were to come here—let's say she would come here and be a witness—she would need not just the child care, but she would certainly need someone to.... So I'm just saying that part should be considered.

The Chair: How would you word that then: including child—

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Including child and/or attendant care.

The Chair: And/or attendant care. Okay.

Would you move that amendment?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: I'll move it.

The Chair: Okay, all those in favour of the motion as amended?

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

The Chair: Okay, on staff at in camera meetings:

Each committee member in attendance shall be permitted to have one staff member attend any in camera meetings. In addition, each party shall be permitted to have one staff member from a House officer attend in camera meetings.

It seems innocuous.

Kellie is moving it.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: On transcripts of in camera meetings:

That in camera meetings be transcribed and that the transcription be kept with the clerk of the committee for later consultation by members of the committee or by their staff.

Do we have a mover for that?

It's Brad, again.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: With regard to notice of motion, you might take a little time to read this one. It's a bit convoluted. It was from the government operations committee, and it was passed there. It simply says:

That a notice of 48 hours, interpreted as two nights, be required before a member may move a substantive motion, unless it deals directly with the matter before the committee at this time, provided that (1) this notice be e-mailed to the committee clerk no later than 5:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; that (2) the notice be distributed by e-mail to members in both official languages by the clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour; that (3) notices received after the deadline hour be deemed to have been received during the next business day; and that (4) this rule does not prevent a member to give notice of a motion orally during a meeting of the committee, in which case notice shall be deemed to have been given before the deadline that day.

I guess it's trying to set out that you need roughly two days, meeting to meeting, for a notice of motion but that you can do one orally.

We have Brad moving it, and we have some discussion.

Jean Crowder.

• (1605)

Ms. Jean Crowder: It's just a clarification. I don't know if it has to say this in the motion, but if a member chooses to give notice orally during the meeting, by unanimous consent we can actually consider the motion at that time.

The Chair: I would say the rule—

Ms. Kellie Leitch: If it's relevant to the business.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Yes, we'd normally put it in our proceedings.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: It doesn't need to be here. It's part of the normal standing committee procedure.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I'm just saying in other committees we've always included "with unanimous consent"—

Ms. Kellie Leitch: We didn't because it would be redundant.

The Chair: If you have unanimous consent, you can do anything—except remove the chair.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I'm fine with that. I just know that with other committees we've always included it.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: All right, I think we have that under wraps. Let's see where we go from here.

You've obviously received the briefing book that sets out a number of things we've looked at and considered. One topic I do want to raise, if the committee would indulge us, would be to deal with the....

Sorry, Kellie.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Chair, I don't know if you want us to deal with the subcommittee.

The Chair: I guess we know the subcommittee will be composed of the chair and the two vice-chairs; we just don't know who the two remaining members will be. It would be good to now indicate them.

We'll entertain a motion to that effect.

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): I nominate Phil McColeman to be the member for the subcommittee on behalf of the Conservative Party.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I think this may be a good time to move to the Centennial Flame Research Award. As you know, the Centennial Flame has a research award that's awarded annually. All the coins that are collected there go to a trust, and it can be explained maybe a little more clearly, but every year there's a notice for those who wish to apply to receive a grant from those proceeds. Maybe you can explain what the criteria are, generally speaking, and summarize it. You might mention the fact that we didn't put out the notice before Parliament adjourned, so we're late for this year, 2011. It would seem that if we were to give adequate notice to people to apply for this fund, we might want to give the clerk and the analyst some time. I know there were discussions saying do what you normally do, but have the proposals come in by October 15 so members can put it in their householders and notify people of that. So that's the first order of business.

I think the fund is usually \$4,500. It's been raised by \$500 increments, and there's some suggestion that maybe we should raise it by another \$500.

So those are the parameters, if you want to go into it in a little more depth. Then we can see if we can entertain the motion you had in mind.

Ms. Chantal Collin: Very simply, the Centennial Flame Research Award has been given out by this committee in one form or another since 1991. It's an award that's given to a person with a disability who will do research and write a report on another person with a disability who contributes to public life in some form or other.

As the chair was saying, normally we send a communiqué in April and we have a roll of reports coming in, in June, but this year, because of the election, that hasn't been done. So we might need more time for MPs as well to notify their constituents to try to give this award a little bit more advertising, so to speak, because we really have difficulty getting a lot of people to apply. We rarely get more than ten.

As the chair was saying, in the last few years, because there's a substantial amount in the fund itself, we've been increasing it by \$500 every year. So last year it was \$5,000, and this year it will be \$5,500. If you need more information, it's in section 5 of your briefing book: the history and the people who have won the awards until this year.

• (1610)

The Chair: Generally, what do we collect on a per annum basis from the coins and stuff that you receive?

Ms. Chantal Collin: I don't know. That would be something the clerk would....

The Clerk: I don't know how much we get per year, but right now we have almost \$18,000.

The Chair: Okay, we have \$18,000 in the fund, just to give it some perspective.

Any questions anyone would have directly? I see Brad has a question.

Mr. Brad Butt: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure if the staff indicated if they're suggesting a deadline for this year or not. Did you say you were suggesting a deadline?

The Chair: Yes, a motion was being distributed and the thought was that October 15, 2011, might be an appropriate deadline—

Mr. Brad Butt: October 15, 2011. Thank you.

The Chair: —to give the appropriate time to notify people and for members of Parliament to highlight the fund in their households or whatever, just to get some interest in it so you'd have a wider audience that might apply.

Joe.

Mr. Joe Daniel: How much is raised each year through this flame?

The Chair: I was asking that question, and I guess there is no answer, except the fact that \$18,000 has been raised over the years that hasn't been spent. I would be curious to know—

A voice: Maybe \$5,000.

The Chair: About \$5,000 or maybe a little bit more is raised, so we're encroaching a little bit on the capital, but not a whole lot.

Any other questions on the motion that's before you?

Mr. Phil McColeman: I believe you said you'd like to see it raised to \$5,500 this year.

Ms. Chantal Collin: It was \$5,000, so an extra \$500 would be \$5,500.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Yes, so \$5,500 was the number you used.

The Chair: Right, and if you note, a motion was circulated that contains both the increase to \$5,500 and the publishing date being October 15, 2011. So if somebody would like to move that motion.... Brad will move it.

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

The Chair: It would be good for us to put that in motion.

Did you want to use this opportunity as well to talk a bit about last year's application or fund? Did you have in mind to do that today or not?

Ms. Chantal Collin: No, I think it's up to the last payment now, so I'm not doing that.

The Chair: Okay, everything's okay.

A quick question.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I noticed in the notes that you often get the award winner to come before the committee at some point. Is that the normal practice?

Ms. Chantal Collin: Honestly, we've been too busy to do it in the last few years, but, yes, it is something that is possible. Certainly we try. The normal cycle should see things calm down a little by the end of June and allow us some time to have them over, but it hasn't happened in many years.

The Chair: It probably wouldn't be a bad idea, though, to make it happen somewhere in a convenient spot, when you have time to do that, so we could hear from them and see how this award is working or not working. It would help publicize it as well. Take a few photos or pictures.

So keep that in mind.

All right, then, we won't have any further discussion on the Centennial Flame Research Award.

Seeing that we still have a bit of time, we may want to talk a little bit about the committee's general feeling about what we might want to be doing in future business.

I should mention that before the last session was finished this committee conducted a fairly extensive study on adoption. The analysts actually prepared a report. We went through the report, tweaked it, and sent it back to them for a final report. Of course then the election was called. Perhaps it would be a bit of waste to let that report simply die.

There was some suggestion that we would bring that report and its evidence before this committee for consideration, maybe for submission as a report of this committee. There was a motion that could be circulated. You can think about that. It would basically bring the evidence and the documentation received before the committee, along with the report, I suppose, for final review by the committee. If the committee is so disposed, it could adopt the report and report it to the House.

The hearings were well received by the witnesses and they actually did point out some fairly interesting gaps or deficiencies that the federal government might look at and address.

So we'll see what the view and the opinion of this committee is.

Maybe what we should do is have someone move the motion, and then we'll have discussion.

Do I have a mover of the motion?

Moved by Mr. Butt.

Now we can have some discussion.

Ms. Crowder, go ahead.

•(1615)

Ms. Jean Crowder: I think it makes a lot of sense to take a look at the work the committee was very near to completing. I'm sure the analyst could provide us with this, but for those who weren't a part of that committee it would be useful to see more than just the draft report. Perhaps we could see some of the background documentation, but not all of the testimony.

The Chair: It does say the evidence and the documentation, so I would suspect it would be the actual—

Ms. Chantal Collin: The issues and options paper that we prepared before the report.

Ms. Jean Crowder: That would be great. That would be very useful.

The Chair: When it says the evidence, it wouldn't be the actual testimony?

Ms. Chantal Collin: That's just brought forward, but it's not distributed.

The Chair: Okay. So if somebody wanted to actually have a review of the evidence, they could?

Ms. Chantal Collin: Yes. It's online.

Ms. Jean Crowder: We can go online for that.

Ms. Chantal Collin: Yes, or we can give you the issues and options paper that came before the report.

The Chair: Okay.

Are you satisfied on that?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Yes. I think that's great.

The Chair: Okay.

Kellie.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Chair, I'd just like to put forward that many of us at this table, myself included, have actually never seen this report, nor would I be comfortable placing my name to a report that I have not seen or did not contribute to.

I first would like to ask the analysts to provide us with that information. If it's available online, that's fabulous. I would not support putting this motion forward until I've seen that documentation, and I'd like to defer this to a discussion in the fall.

The Chair: Okay.

Just to be clear, this is not asking this committee to adopt the report, it's just asking this committee to receive the evidence and the report for consideration.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: I just ask that the analyst bring us forward with something, and we'll leave it at that.

The Chair: All right.

We have this motion. We'll have to vote on this motion. Unless you want to amend it, we'll have to vote on this thing.

Mr. Brad Butt: It's helpful, Mr. Chairman. I understand what the parliamentary secretary is trying to say.

I was under the impression this was just a motion that would allow that report to come to this committee for us to consider. Most of us weren't here to hear that evidence and be part of it and whatever.

I'm quite interested in this issue. But if it's only an information report back to the committee and our names aren't one it, we're not part of it, because we didn't adjudicate on it, then I would have no problem withdrawing this motion and coming up with something that is more in line with what Dr. Leitch would like it to say.

The Chair: Just before we do anything here, let's make sure we have all the right information.

The clerk was mentioning something. Do you want to indicate what you were saying to me?

The Clerk: This motion allows for the committee to be able to see what was done in the previous Parliament. It doesn't mean that we adopt the report; it just allows us to bring back from the past what was done so we can study it and resume the study where it was left off.

The Chair: Okay.

Phil is next, and then we'll come back to Kellie.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I'm totally uncomfortable with saying that we will resume the study. We can accept the information and review it, but this committee needs to talk about a lot of subject matter. If we want to resume this study as part of that discussion, I'm fine with that. But saying we're going to resume this study today without knowing the broader context... We have new members here. We're just getting briefed on the subject matter and the different programs the committee deals with. To say today that we're going to resume a study is totally inappropriate.

The motion might read that committee members will receive information regarding the previous study, to be discussed when we set our agenda for what we're going to be doing, but not that we're going to resume the study.

•(1620)

The Chair: All right.

Kellie.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Just as Mr. McColeman commented, I am very comfortable with us accepting the information. We've asked for the analysis that's been done, and that's fabulous. But I am very uncomfortable with the statement here that we're resuming a study. I would not support a motion to resume the study that was being done.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion?

Carol.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: To say that we're going to be uncomfortable about a study that was being done, obviously all parties were part of the study. But if you're more comfortable with that, I think we need to bring the information forward. So maybe it should read—and I'll move this—that the committee be provided with the information from the previous study in order to determine if it will finalize the report or consider it as an agenda item for the committee.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: I'm happy to accept the first portion of Ms. Hughes' comment that we'll accept the information, but not with the caveat that we would necessarily be moving forward with the study.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: The way I am putting this is not that we're going to move forward with it, but that we need to make a decision to consider whether we're going to continue with the study.

The Chair: Let's try to get that as an amendment to the motion and put some words to it.

What I heard you say was that the committee be provided with the information from the previous study of the federal support measures to adoptive parents, etc., and that the evidence and documentation received during the third session of the 40th Parliament on the subject be taken into consideration by the committee in this session in deciding whether to resume the study.

Is that what you're hoping to say?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Okay, good.

The Chair: Do you want to move that as an amendment?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Yes.

The Chair: All in favour?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

The Chair: I suppose we still have a few minutes. I think we've covered a lot of ground. We could stop here, or have some general discussion about where you'd like to see this committee go, and whatever.

Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I'd make a motion to adjourn.

The Chair: That's not a bad thing to vote on at this time of the day.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: When we come back in the fall we'll see you. Have a good summer.

The meeting is adjourned.

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