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Chair

Mr. David Christopherson

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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• (1405)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP)): I now declare this special meeting of the public accounts committee in order.

I would ask the media to please excuse us and allow us to get on with our business.

Notwithstanding that the media has just left, I do remind members that this is televised. Everyone still has an opportunity to follow the proceedings.

You'll notice that we had a quick little meeting just before we started. I met with the three caucus leaders to talk about how we begin.

I'll set the stage by reading the rules that brought us to this point, and then put before you a suggested way to proceed.

I remind colleagues that this meeting has been convened pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), which reads as follows:

Within five days of the receipt, by the clerk of a standing committee, of a request signed by any four members of the said committee, the Chair of the said committee shall convene such a meeting provided that forty-eight hours' notice is given of the meeting.

That, everyone is in agreement, took place. We have followed all the rules.

For the purposes of this section, the reasons for convening such a meeting shall be stated in the request.

I'll read the wording of the letter that was signed by the four members who triggered this. It relates to what I just said, that the reason for convening such a meeting shall be stated in the request, and it is as such:

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), I the undersigned

—in this case, I have Monsieur Dubé's copy in my hand—

request that the Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts convene a meeting in order to study Chapter 2—Replacing Canada's Fighter Jets, of the 2012 Spring Report of the Auditor General of Canada.

Four members of the committee requested that a meeting be convened to discuss their request to undertake a study of chapter 2.

O'Brien and Bosc state in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, at page 1084:

In considering the request, the committee decides whether or not it wishes to take up the requested subject matter. There is no obligation on the committee to conclude debate. If it decides to consider the matter, it may do so as and when it wishes.

The reason I'm doing this is that we all know there are at least two notices of motion before us that are applicable to this matter. What I need members to understand is that unlike a regular meeting, those motions are not stacked up, sort of waiting to be brought in. They can be brought in—any matter of business can be dealt with—but only on a motion, and then a majority vote.

So this is not a race to see whose motion gets in front of us first, at least not at the get-go. That's why I held that meeting. You can see the rules are very loose. I've never been comfortable with this notion, when things are really serious and a lot of the politics of the meeting gets determined by who gets the floor first, that the fair way is for the chair to recognize the first person they see. I have always found that patently unfair, because it means that anyone with arthritis loses, or that a chair who happens to glance the other way sees one hand when another hand was up sooner.

I mean, I've done it, and I'll do it, because that's the only thing we have, but you know my discomfort with that as a fair way to decide who gets the floor first. I've even suggested to this committee that I'd like to convene some quiet meetings to talk about how we would find a fair rule to deal with that. But we don't have that right now, so in trying to prevent a rush of who was first and then a big fight about “My hand was up first, theirs was second”, I've asked the principals, the three leaders of the three caucuses, if we could find agreement on how to open. We have.

The agreement is that we will allow Mr. Saxton first, then Mr. Allen, and then Mr. Byrne to each have two minutes. During that time there will be no motions put. It is strictly an opportunity for them to give their thoughts on behalf of their caucus as to how they think we should proceed, or anything else they want to talk about.

You have two minutes. Hopefully at the end of that we'll have some idea of where we want to go; otherwise it will be back to whoever gets the floor first can talk or move motions, and we'll take it from there.

Is everybody in agreement with proceeding in that fashion?

Mr. Saxton.

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): I have one question. Having been privy to the meeting outside, you did not say that we could not introduce motions during our two minutes.

The Chair: Yes, I did.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: We discussed that we would have two minutes to talk about whatever we wanted to talk about and then it would go to the next person for two minutes and then the next person for two minutes.

The Chair: No.

• (1410)

Mr. Andrew Saxton: That was my understanding. There was no agreement on whether or not motions would be introduced.

The Chair: No. Doing that would not have gotten us any further, because whoever had the floor first in that rotation would have won the race to see who gets their hand up. The whole idea was to avoid that, if we can, and offer up some thoughts as to how we might proceed.

I said very clearly that there would be no motions, and that's the reason why. It would completely negate the whole purpose. So no motions. It's an opportunity: state your case. You know why we're here. You all know the rules. We've had an agreement, and that agreement has been adopted by this committee.

I will now start with Mr. Saxton. Please do not violate the agreement. Do not move a motion.

You have two minutes, sir, to say what you wish. You could indicate your intention to move motions, fair game, but a motion moved during these two minutes will not be recognized by the chair.

Having said that, Mr. Saxton, you have the floor.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak on this subject.

I'd like to begin by saying that the government welcomes the opportunity to study the spring 2012 report of the Auditor General, beginning with chapter 2, "Replacing Canada's Fighter Jets". We also welcome the opportunity to interview witnesses on this subject, witnesses to be decided by this committee. I assume those witnesses will include the Auditor General and also the Parliamentary Budget Officer, deputy ministers, and whoever they decide to bring. We look forward to moving ahead on this as quickly as possible.

We recognize that there are two motions before the committee and that those two motions are similar, except that one of those motions, by the opposition, wants to tell the rest of the committee who those witnesses should be. This is unorthodox. It is not the practice of this committee. It is the committee that decides who those witnesses are.

So we look forward to moving ahead. We do agree that this should be the first chapter that we study, that we study it in depth, and that the committee comes up with the witnesses to be called in.

In that regard, I call upon Mr. Byrne, who has put forward the other motion, to consider retracting that motion and agreeing to the motion that I put forward, which is essentially the same as Mr. Byrne's, recognizing that there are 12 members of this committee and that all 12 members should have a say in who the witnesses are. It is not one member who dictates to the other 11 who those witnesses should be. Based on that, Mr. Chair, I ask my colleague Mr. Byrne to consider withdrawing his motion and accepting my motion, which is very similar to his except it allows everybody to have input into who the witnesses are.

Thank you.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you, Mr. Saxton.

Mr. Allen, for two minutes.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

I'm hoping we can find common ground somewhere. Our role as New Democrats is certainly going to be to try to broker conflicting motions, dueling motions. It reminds one of being a kid in the schoolyard and the two new kids show up with two new soccer balls and they keep saying "We're not playing soccer unless it's with my ball". I'm hoping we'll just actually play soccer.

Let's actually get the witness list together. Let's move expeditiously. That's what the Canadian public expects of us. This back and forth between whether it be Mr. Byrne's motion or Mr. Saxton's motion, at the end of the day what this committee needs to resolve on a go-forward basis is we need a schedule. We need an expeditious schedule. We need to do it quickly, and we need to get a fulsome witness list.

I hear my colleague Mr. Saxton saying that's what they want. Then we need to actually do that so that we can go forward and study this chapter in depth and make sure we are answering the things that need to be answered. Those are the things we intend to do at this meeting. I hope we will come out with a conclusion all of us can agree on at the end of this meeting.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Allen.

Mr. Byrne, for two minutes, sir.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, colleagues, for assembling here during what would normally be a constituency week.

The Liberal Party of Canada and I felt very strongly, and I know that Canadians feel very strongly, that this is a very serious issue. It's top of mind with many Canadians because there are difficult choices being made in the lives of individual Canadians—choices that reflect the fact that the government is presenting that we have a crisis in old age security and we have a crisis in funding programs and services.

Yet the Auditor General of Canada has found that there is a crisis in the accounting and the acquisition of the F-35 fighter jet process. On April 3, some weeks ago, Mr. Chair, I tabled a motion to call on this committee to actually engage in an immediate study. We presented certain witnesses. I want to be very clear: the list of witnesses that has been proposed in this motion is not exhaustive or all-inclusive. Specifically, my motion says "but not be limited to".

The ten witnesses that are proposed within my motion are not an exclusive list. It is not Gerry Byrne or the Liberal Party of Canada determining who will appear as witnesses to this committee. In fact, given the fact that we've all had a little bit of a break and we've come back refreshed, I'm confident that the Conservative Party of Canada hasn't wasted their time and come here today without a witness list to propose. I am certainly amenable, and I know that other colleagues are, to a friendly amendment to add to this witness list.

Mr. Chair, one thing that Canadians will not abide is stalling and dragging feet. This is a serious issue. We are in a planning session right now. Let's get to approving a witness list, and let's get on with hearings right now. I hope they didn't come empty-handed.

•(1415)

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we go any further, I want to extend to anyone else an opportunity to have their say. We heard from the caucus leaders, which is an informal position. Therefore, I want to afford every caucus member an opportunity to take their two minutes, if they wish, with the same rules.

Mr. Kramp.

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Chair, you may recall that at previous meetings the Conservative Party of Canada and all of the members of the opposition have wanted to move forward with this. We have suggested a motion, and discussed and brought forward the actual process to go forward. We asked for a planning session, expeditiously, and that this would be on April 24. We all knew that, and we were all prepared to go with that. We're not prepared to unilaterally dictate a witness list. Just as Mr. Byrne has a list of people he would like—and I respect that—so does each and every other member here.

To strengthen Mr. Saxton's point, this is a committee that has historically worked in a non-partisan mode. This is a committee that historically has been able to bring forward facts, deal with facts, and deal with a good quality and quantity of witnesses that can directly contribute to the successful evolution of this examination and study.

We need to work with that. We need to talk about it back and forth, and deliberate. As an example, if Mr. Allen were to bring forward someone and I had no idea who this individual was and if he were to extol their virtues and demonstrate to this committee why that individual should be here as a witness, I would most certainly be willing to say, "Fine, you've made your point. You have a very good point", and we would acquiesce to that. That goes for each and every individual here.

But to just unilaterally say we're doing this person, this person, this person, and this person.... It's not a procedure that this committee has ever followed, not in the history of the eight years that I've been working with the committee. We've always worked at a planning session to state the schedule and witnesses, and to come up with an approximation of how many hearings would be necessary to deal with this. That's what we need, Chair.

The Chair: The floor is still open for a two-minute speaking spot.

Hearing none, Mr. Saxton.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Chair, I appreciate that you've taken the opportunity to give everybody a chance to speak on this matter, because I think that's very important.

At this time, because the government is keen to get moving on this subject, and because I put forward a motion on behalf of the government already, what I would like to do now is to reintroduce the motion that I put before the committee over two weeks ago. That motion was:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Public Accounts begin a study of the Spring 2012 Report of the Auditor General, beginning with Chapter 2 (Replacing Canada's Fighter Jets), and that the Committee hold a planning session at the meeting of April 24, 2012, to determine the witness list and agenda for the study, and that when the study is completed the Committee report its findings to the House of Commons.

Mr. Chair, what I would like to do at this time is to put this motion forward for debate and approval by this committee, so that we can get moving on this subject.

The Chair: That's why I wanted to read the rules very carefully in terms of the kind of meeting we're in. We're in an emergency meeting, and special rules apply. Ordinarily you'd be able to just move that motion as a notice of motion. You'd be able to, at the appropriate time—which would be now, in business—move it. However, given the rules we're under, your motion actually needs to be that you move that we deal with your motion.

There's nothing on our order paper, given that this is a special meeting. Therefore to bring something in front of us requires a motion. In this case what you want to do is to bring a notice of motion forward.

I'm speaking to everyone here. The motion would be that the committee agree to bring forward Mr. Saxton's motion. It sounds complicated. The debate will all take place over whatever motion's in front of us, but that is the procedure.

Is everybody okay with that? Does everybody understand where we are?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Very good. That is the motion.

•(1420)

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Chair, you've accepted, then, that—

The Chair: I have accepted that motion, and it's to move to another item of business.

I'm going to entertain debate on that motion. Therefore I'll take names for a speakers list, starting with Mr. Allen.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Thank you, Chair.

Speaking to the motion, I find two pieces problematic, and perhaps Mr. Saxton will be able to address them for me.

The first is that we "begin a study of the Spring 2012 Report". The obvious question to that is, when? Of course it says that this committee will then hold a planning session at the meeting on April 24—which is Tuesday coming up—versus now, when we're actually here. I don't see a reason to delay. Why wouldn't we indeed work on our witness lists? We are certainly prepared to do that. I would hope that other members are as well. I don't know that for certain, but I would expect there's probably some work being done.

If it isn't a complete list, my suggestion to Mr. Saxton would be that there maybe needs to be a friendly amendment that leaves it open. If the government doesn't have a full list at this point and wants to add one or two or three or four or ten later on, they'd be allowed to do that, as would any other member, if that's the case.

I certainly don't want to see us pass a motion in this regard, to wait till Tuesday. As we know, we have business on the agenda for Tuesday now. This would just simply push everything back. We're here. We're scheduled to be here till four o'clock. Why not simply get the work done?

I know that the preference of my colleagues on the committee is to always use our time wisely, and I believe it's been done in the past. I think in this particular case, perhaps Mr. Saxton can help me with those two parts.

When are we going to do it? Obviously we want to do it right away. I believe I heard from Mr. Kramp and from Mr. Saxton earlier in their opening remarks that they also want to get this under way very expeditiously. I choose that word because it means "right away". Obviously it won't be today. We can't get witnesses here today, but we certainly can get them here in a very quick fashion. I would look to you, Chair, and to the clerk to help us with that, for obviously probably sometime next week, which would open things up for next Thursday.

Of course I'm looking for us to take out April 24, because that simply pushes us back. I don't see why we can't start that process today, and hopefully even finish it, if possible. I don't know. I look to my colleagues to help me with those two particular parts.

As for the rest of it, Chair—reporting back to the House—that's standard procedure for this committee. We write a report, and we report it back. I see nothing wrong with that. Having the Auditor General come back to do chapter 2 is obvious. I would absolutely agree that he should probably be our first witness to speak specifically to the chapter.

I am looking for answers to those two specific points I've raised in regard to Mr. Saxton's motion.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Allen referred to something on the agenda. Just so we're factually correct, next Tuesday we have a public hearing scheduled for chapter 5 of the fall 2011 AG report. If Mr. Saxton's motions carry—both motions, because this one has to pass, and then there's the one he's actually putting—then we would reschedule, postpone that meeting. I assume you're not looking to eliminate it, but it would be rescheduled. It would be pushed over, and we would use that time to do a planning meeting, correct?

An hon. member: Yes.

The Chair: Very good.

The floor's open. I don't have a speakers list.

Mr. Byrne. I'm sorry your name didn't make it to the list. You have the floor now.

•(1425)

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Oh, thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate your thoughtfulness on this particular issue.

I will correct the government on a couple of matters. One, the public accounts committee in the past has indeed received and passed motions to convene studies, and witness lists have been included in those motions. That happened quite recently, actually. The government was a part of that. So it's not against the traditions of this committee to have motions before us in which witnesses were "pre-prescribed".

I want to be very clear, however: this is not a "pre-prescription" of witnesses. This is not a limitation on witnesses. In fact, it's an open

invitation to add witnesses. The motion I put forward was very specific in its wording: "that the witness list include, but not be limited to".

We came here—or at least I assume we came here—with the idea that this would be the planning session. All parties came here, I assumed, with a list of witnesses so that we could get on with the work at hand. I anticipated that all parties and all members would come forward and make a friendly amendment to add their list of witnesses to my motion.

I hope nobody has come here, after weeks of waiting for this study to occur, to suggest that we take another little bit of time, that we have a planning session down the road. I hope people came here to get to work. We certainly did.

There is nothing in my original motion and my original list of witnesses that precludes other witnesses from being added to the list. If the government would like to point out what objection it has to having Craig Morris, the deputy director for F-35 industrial participation at Industry Canada, appear before us, I'd like to hear what the objection is. If they don't want to include Mr. Craig Morris in the witness list now, I'd make an assumption that they won't want to include Mr. Craig Morris in the list down the road in some future planning session.

I'd like to know why the government does not want Richard Dicerni, the Deputy Minister of Industry, to appear before us. I'd like to know why the government does not want Johanne Provencher, the director general of the defence and major projects directorate at the Department of Public Works, to appear before us. I'd like to know why Tom Ring, the assistant deputy minister of the acquisitions branch at Public Works, should not be allowed to appear before us, or why Colonel D.C. Burt, the director of new-generation fighter capability at the Department of National Defence, shouldn't be allowed to appear before us.

I'd like to ask the government why it thinks that Michael J. Slack, the F-35 project manager, director of continental materiel cooperation at National Defence, shouldn't actually be one of the witnesses to appear before us. I'd like to know why Lieutenant-General J.P.A. Deschamps, Chief of the Air Staff at National Defence, is not really a priority witness, or Dan Ross, the assistant deputy minister for materiel at National Defence.

The Chair: Hold on, Mr. Byrne.

On a point of order, Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It was my understanding that we put a motion on the floor to consider a motion, and that is the motion we're supposed to be debating. It would appear that Mr. Byrne is already taking the notion that his motion has already been accepted to be debated, and he's debating that motion instead of the one before the floor. I'd like to get back to the point at hand.

The Chair: I hear your point of order.

This gives me the perfect opportunity to mention something as the discussion is unfolding. I would point out—and I'm non-partisan as the chair—that the two motions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. I think Mr. Allen alluded to that.

Look at them carefully. They aren't necessarily mutually exclusive. There is a compromise that's pretty obvious if we can agree on the details, so I point that out.

In terms of the comment, as members know, there's a lot more latitude at committee meetings. In particular, it's known that what members can say and not say in the House of Commons is very tightly controlled. There is a little more latitude. I haven't heard Mr. Byrne starting to talk about foreign affairs or health care or railways. He's speaking within the gamut of the three motions that are around us—one before us and two that are sort of there.

All of that is to say I think he's in order. I'm listening carefully. I do get these points of order from the government when it believes opposition members are going off the point to score political points. I understand that, but at this point I do believe that Mr. Byrne is within the confines of the matter at hand. But I'm listening closely.

Thank you, Madame.

Mr. Byrne, you have the floor again.

• (1430)

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Thank you.

I'd like to know why the government does not consider Mr. Dan Ross, the assistant deputy minister for materiel for the Department of National Defence, to be a priority witness appearing before us.

If we look at my original motion, Mr. Chair, it was basically to begin the study as soon as possible and to arrange a preliminary witness list, knowing full well that other MPs would be able to bring forward their own amendments to the motion and add to the witness list. I don't think anyone really wants us to spend a huge amount of time in a planning and priority session. It's April 19 today. This is the planning session, and it was intended to be the planning session; we should be proceeding immediately.

If the government could explain why they don't accept these witnesses, I think we'd all appreciate hearing their reasons. I think we'd also appreciate hearing why they didn't come to this meeting with their own lists of witnesses they could include by amending this motion. That way everyone gets an opportunity to participate in this planning session to approve the study on the F-35 acquisition, the Auditor General's report.

Mr. Chair, since you are providing some procedural advice and guidelines to members, is the process that we're engaged in right now to adopt the motion, and then, subsequent to tabling the motion, to actually debate and vote on the motion after that?

The Chair: That's correct.

Right now we are debating a motion that, if carried by majority, would put Mr. Saxton's motion in front of us. It would be in order, and I would give him the floor to speak to it. That's where we are. If, however, this motion loses, we're back to square one, and the floor would be open.

You still have the floor.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I'd be prepared to proceed. In fairness, once the motion is on the floor, I'll be voting against it, based on the principle that my motion was indeed tabled first.

The Chair: I'm not sure I'm following. When you say you'd vote against the motion, do you mean the one in front of us now or the one that would follow?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: No, it's to include Mr. Saxton's motion.

The Chair: Okay.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I think that convention and courtesy would suggest that the first mover of a motion within a committee would have the precedence to have that motion heard first. Mr. Saxton did indeed use an opportunity to advance his motion; it was basically verbatim to what he had placed some time ago, but it was well after I had already placed my motion.

I'm not going to get caught up on that. The facts are that my motion was tabled on April 3. There was a notice of motion that went around. In reaction to that, at committee on April 5 Mr. Saxton then tabled a counter-motion, which is basically the substance of what we're discussing right now.

I just think we should get on with this. I don't think anyone should be afraid of bringing forward bureaucrats who were directly involved in all this. If my motion is just not acceptable to the government for some reason, what they really need to do is explain to Canadians, at least to all of us here, why they don't want the senior officials who could shed so much light on this issue to appear before us. Otherwise, are we simply going through an exercise in which they'll be included anyway? If that's the case, it just doesn't make a whole lot of sense. We're wasting time.

Mr. Chair, we'll get to the business at hand, I hope, and we'll use our time more productively.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you.

I have a list of speakers. The first speaker is Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I find it a little frustrating and confusing that this was called as a "planning meeting", as my colleague across the aisle says. If I might read the reason for the meeting, it says, pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), "Meeting requested by four members"—which means the opposition called this meeting—"of the committee to consider a study of chapter 2, 'Replacing Canada's Fighter Jets', of the spring 2012 report of the Auditor General of Canada".

• (1435)

The Chair: Just to keep us all clear, and the public, it could have been any four members; it didn't have to be the opposition. If I receive letters from four members...I don't see parties in that case, just so you know. It's not just the opposition.

Go ahead.

Mr. Bev Shipley: I'm wondering if the member opposite actually notified us through any venue that he was planning for this to be a planning meeting. Actually it talks about considering a study. We have the study. We've had the discussion, as our parliamentary secretary has indicated in his motion, which was actually out on April 4, where there had been opportunity prior to today's meeting to move forward, I would suggest, but we chose not to at that time. This motion could have actually gone.... We could have actually been moving forward with a list.

I'm wondering, speaking of courtesies, if any notification came to our parliamentary secretary about what the agenda would have been today with regard to a planning meeting.

The Chair: Are you asking somebody a question?

Mr. Bev Shipley: I'm asking you, through the chair, through the clerk—

The Chair: I have no knowledge of that. I'm not aware that the staff have any knowledge of that.

You can ask Mr. Byrne, but once he gets the floor, he has the floor.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Well, then I'll leave that as a statement.

The Chair: I thought you might.

• (1440)

Mr. Bev Shipley: In fact, we didn't get any notice of it, but I thought maybe the clerk might have been able to confirm whether anything had come through that office.

The Chair: It didn't come through our offices, no.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Thank you, sir.

What it is right now...clearly Mr. Byrne has put out a list. In fact, our parliamentary secretary said we would want to have many of those people, so contrary to what he's saying, that we wouldn't want those people, or why would we not...that's about today's discussion, about how we select.

I've been on the committee before, and in terms of fairness—and I look across to Mr. Allen—we always want to put a list forward from all parties.

Nobody said today was a planning meeting. We didn't get the courtesy of that notice.

I would suggest to my parliamentary secretary that I would support this motion. In fact, we might add a friendly amendment to help satisfy Mr. Allen, that actually we could bring witnesses forward on the 24th. That starts to establish the date when we want to move forward, because really it indicates that we don't want to hold this thing up, contrary to what has been said earlier; we want to move forward on it because we want clarification on this study that the Auditor General has brought forward on the F-35s.

I would add that a friendly amendment could follow to determine the witness list, an agenda for the study to begin with the witnesses on Thursday, April 26. That would be a friendly amendment, which would help the NDP with their concern that the Conservative Party is saying it wants to do something but actually is not saying when. We actually have said we want to, and we'll put the date in place so that they know when we want to start. Then we can go back, Mr. Chair, to having the planning meeting, as this thing should be laid out, and

have the fulsome discussion about the number of people we should be bringing forward and look at the list.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you, Mr. Shipley.

I am, of course, in the hands of the majority of the committee. However, from a practical point of view, it would be very difficult to pull in all the people we would need for the 24th.

You did make reference to the 26th, which I would say is doable, if everybody helped out and massaged their schedules. That is doable, but the 24th, I want to advise members, would be difficult. I'm just worried that we would set it up and it would fail. The 26th, though, will work.

Staying with those who have not yet had a chance to speak the first time before I go to a second-time speakers list, Mr. Kramp, and then Monsieur Dubé.

Mr. Kramp, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to make a couple of points that I think are important.

A planning meeting is not just deciding we're going to call some witnesses. It's not that simple. A lot goes into that planning meeting. We have to decide not only the list of witnesses we would like to have but in what order we would like them to appear. Would we have them there to corroborate testimony? Would we have them there to potentially oppose testimony? Would we have people from the Auditor General's office at the same time as we would have people from DND? Would we give each of them their time to move forward separately?

There are a lot of issues that can play out here that should be before this committee for some serious deliberation in order to get the answers and responses we need. That's why, quite frankly, a planning meeting is important. Let's get at it; that's the point. We need to get at it immediately. If there are other issues that are on our calendar right now, I as a government member would be willing to take those issues and put them on the back seat right now in order to expedite this. Certainly the opposition members want it and certainly the government members want it, so let's just get to it that way.

Let's do it and do it right. Let's not bastardize the process. Quite frankly, when we do that we're not going to get the results we need. Let's do it the way it should be done—effectively, professionally. Moving forward, we will deal with this study in a comprehensive manner. I'm very confident with that.

I will leave that with the committee for their thoughts.

The Chair: Thank you.

If I can, in the interest of moving things along, Mr. Aspin will follow Monsieur Dubé. I will mention that we've now had two of the three caucuses indicate publicly, if I understood correctly, that they're prepared to support this motion that would let us get to the substantive motion.

I look to Monsieur Dubé to see if he is in a position to offer up the position of the NDP. That would mean all three caucuses are onside, which means there really isn't a good reason to belabour this debate. We can then move on to the new debate.

With that, Monsieur Dubé, you have the floor, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): That's exactly what I was going to say. As Mr. Allen said so eloquently earlier, our position is quite clear. An emergency meeting was called, and I think we need to proceed quickly. Everyone is constantly stating how important this file is, so let's go, let's get to work.

This is the first emergency meeting I have been to, but if I understand correctly, if we propose amendments—as we intend to do in an effort to speed things up—we must be able to discuss those amendments, to see whether there is any negotiating to be done. I think we need to adopt this first motion, which would enable us to discuss the substantive issue, as you mentioned.

We are prepared to support this motion. We must determine whether the government is going to be open-minded and support our amendments so we can finally get down to the real business at hand. This is pressing work; and that is why we are here.

[*English*]

The Chair: Merci.

Again, colleagues, I point out the obvious. It would appear that there is likely a majority support for this motion. People still have the right to take the floor and speak their mind—that's your right—but I am asking people to keep in mind that the purpose of the meeting is to actually get somewhere.

Mr. Aspin, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As Mr. Saxton has indicated, the government is prepared to move on and have this study. It welcomes this study. By his remarks and the motion he has indicated and other colleagues have indicated that a great number, if not all, of the witnesses Mr. Byrne has proposed are going to be on it.

I'm at a loss, Mr. Chair. I'm a new member here, and I just don't know what Mr. Byrne is doing. I don't understand it. It seems to me there's a lot of game-playing going on here. Let's just move on.

The Chair: I agree in moving on. Let's stay focused and try not to personalize things.

I have second-time speakers. Is it really necessary? Let me push a little.

Mr. Saxton, do you want the floor? You have the right to it.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: I would like the floor if you're ready for me.

The Chair: I don't have a choice. Yes, I'm ready. Go ahead.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to address a couple of the issues that have been brought up by my colleagues. The first one was by Mr. Shipley, and that was his suggestion that a friendly amendment be made to my

motion indicating that Thursday, April 26, could be the first day of witnesses. I think it was actually Mr. Allen who had originally suggested that, because at least that way we've got a date to work with.

I'd just like to say that I would be willing to accept that friendly amendment to my motion, should the committee decide to go that route.

I'd also just like to say, for Mr. Byrne's satisfaction.... And I certainly hope Mr. Byrne would reconsider what he said earlier about not voting for my motion; I certainly would like it to be unanimous, and would be delighted if he could come on board. I would like to assure him that the witnesses the government would certainly be happy to bring forward to support would be the Auditor General, of course, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, deputy ministers, and whoever the deputy ministers would like to bring along; it's their decision.

Having said that, I certainly hope that Mr. Byrne would reconsider my motion. Let's move ahead in the spirit of cooperation the public accounts committee has been used to in the past, in previous Parliaments.

We have made a lot of progress and we have done a lot of good work in this committee, as Mr. Kramp and Mr. Christopherson, who are the deans of this committee, can attest. I've been on this committee I think longer than most. So I certainly hope we can move forward in the spirit of cooperation to get this done properly. It certainly would be nice to have a unanimous vote on my motion. I may be too optimistic in that regard, but it certainly would be nice. The government would like to move on, so that we can get going, as I stated earlier.

Thank you.

•(1445)

The Chair: Thank you.

Before I go to Mr. Byrne, because I'm assuming he'll want his second crack, and then I'll push again to try to get a vote, just to keep us clear, because this is all very technical and easily confusing, Mr. Saxton, your motion, if passed, would have us meet on Tuesday to do the planning. That would definitely not be enough time to hold a hearing on the 26th. It's only two days.

The other way to go is to do the witness list today. Now, I realize that normally that's a lot of work, but I'm hearing a fair bit of agreement. I really am. We've got an hour and 15 minutes on the schedule. If we agree that we're going to attempt to hold at least the first hearings on the chapter next Thursday—and there may be more—it behoves us not to pass the motion exactly the way it's written, because I just don't think we can get all the players there within 48 hours. I think the Auditor General would move mountains, of course—this is his committee—but there are other players, deputy ministers, who have serious commitments, and they can't move them that quickly. All it takes is one of the main principals, and we don't have the kind of meeting we want.

So it seems to me that we've got two choices to make. We can agree today, at the very least, on a preliminary list of who would come next Thursday. That would suggest that there would probably be a second meeting. That would be the easiest thing to do today, to use Mr. Byrne's motion as the base of what the witness list would look like and begin talking about it and come to agreement, at least in terms of initial witnesses, even the most obvious: the Auditor General, the Deputy Minister of Defence, the Deputy Minister of Public Works. There are two or three that are obvious. If we could come to that much agreement, then we can thrash out the balance of Mr. Byrne's list, those that the NDP may want to consider, and the government may have members that are not in Mr. Byrne's list, or they may ask that some people come off that list. But that discussion we could have on Tuesday to further plan for hearings, while still putting in motion an initial hearing on Thursday.

Just keep in mind that passing Mr. Saxton's motion for a planning meeting on the 24th would all but end our discussion today, because it puts off the discussion of the witness list until next Tuesday, which means we likely could not hold a hearing on Thursday. Whereas if we could agree on two or three principals today, we could have a public hearing on Thursday and still have a meeting on Tuesday to determine the balance of the witness list.

I leave that with members. I'm just trying to help keep things clear, because this does get kind of technical.

Mr. Byrne, you have the floor, sir.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I kind of assumed that the more the government talked about their position the more they'd expose about their position. I think we've seen the light as to exactly where the government stands on a major issue.

It has been suggested that it is outrageous for a member of this committee to come before the committee with a selection of proposals for who could appear as witnesses on a particular topic, that it's outrageous to include those names in a motion—how dare he suggest that he's got all the answers when we're not involved in this? Well, that was never the intent. It was clearly never the intent when I said that it would not be limited to the following witnesses.

What I find really interesting, Mr. Chair, is if it's so outrageous that somebody dictates to this committee who the witnesses are going to be, why did Mr. Saxton just say that they'll accept the Auditor General, they'll accept Kevin Page, and they'll accept deputy ministers, but it will be deputy ministers who decide who joins them to appear before this committee? So this committee won't decide which officials appear before us; it will be the deputy ministers' prerogative, and the committee has no right to establish which officials below the deputy minister level should appear before us. So it's outrageous that a member of the committee could actually suggest who the witnesses will be, yet the government are prepared and have actually decided that they're going to delegate who the witnesses will be to deputy ministers. That's rather a self-aggrandizing sort of position to take.

It clearly leads to deputy ministers having the capacity to prevent testimony from being presented before us. I personally would like to hear from Colonel D.C. Burt, director of new-generation fighter

capability at the Department of National Defence; Michael J. Slack, the F-35 project manager; Lieutenant-General Deschamps, Chief of the Air Staff. But you know what—we'll let the deputy minister decide that.

With that, Mr. Chair, we have exposed exactly where the government is going with this.

Let's just have a vote.

• (1450)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Byrne.

Mr. Saxton, you have the floor.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think it's important that we put this motion to a vote.

The Chair: Okay.

Monsieur Dubé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: All I want to say is that we are still discussing the motion that, once adopted, will allow us to deal with Mr. Saxton's motion. That is what we are trying to do: we want to be able to at least propose amendments, so we can carry on with the work. Everyone is trying to figure out which motion is the best, when we aren't even there yet. We must deal with this motion: that is what we are saying, loud and clear.

[*English*]

The Chair: Very good.

In the absence of any further speakers, the debate has collapsed.

Mr. Allen, you have the floor.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: It's just for a point of clarification, Mr. Chair.

I'm sure you're going to tell us exactly what we're voting on. This is a motion to entertain Mr. Saxton's motion, so that folks aren't confused, because then we can actually go back and debate the motion, which we sort of did anyway, but no doubt we're about to do it again to some degree. I want to be comfortable knowing that this first vote is simply to accept the fact that we're going to entertain the motion that Mr. Saxton has presented to us, and then hopefully they'll move, technically—and correctly so—the amendments we've proposed that Mr. Shipley has brought forward.

Am I correct in assuming that's the order we're going to go in?

The Chair: You are correct in assuming that I will make it very clear what we're going to vote on just before we do.

Are there any other speakers?

Given the speakers list has exhausted, I will now move this committee to a vote. Debate is now concluded.

The motion is now on whether or not the majority of this committee agree that Mr. Saxton's motion, which he has read into the record, would indeed be placed before the committee and would be properly before us as our next item of business. Is everybody clear? It would seem that we are.

I am going to ask for a recorded vote so that it's crystal-clear every step of the way. Therefore, without further ado I will ask the clerk to take a roll call vote of the motion by Mr. Saxton.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

• (1455)

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move to the order of that motion, which is Mr. Saxton's motion, which I believe, Madam Clerk, when he read it just now, replicated verbatim the original motion we received.

The motion been circulated.

I'll go to you on a point. Are you looking for a point, or do you want the floor?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I would like to—

The Chair: Okay, you're the second speaker, then.

Where we are right now is in front of you. This motion by Mr. Saxton, in printed form and in both languages, is now duly before this committee.

May I apologize to Mr. Kellway? I should have recognized you, sir, as a guest to this committee. I apologize. We welcome you today.

I'm doing it because people may wonder why you weren't voting. Of course, people who aren't permanent members of the committee don't vote, but all colleagues are entitled to attend meetings if they wish. Given that you're one of the critics for the F-35, it's understandable why you're here. Again, I apologize for not welcoming you sooner, but welcome today.

With that, we are on the motion. I'm ready to go to the first speakers.

Mr. Saxton, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What I would like to do at this point is refresh everybody's memory, since it's been almost an hour since I read this last time. I would like to reread my motion, including the friendly amendment by Mr. Shipley. That part's a work in progress.

It reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Public Accounts begin a study of the Spring 2012 Report of the Auditor General, beginning with Chapter 2 (Replacing Canada's Fighter Jets), and that the Committee hold a planning session at the meeting of April 24, 2012, to determine the witness list and agenda for the study, and that when the study is complete the Committee report its finding to the House of Commons.

In addition, I would like to include Mr. Shipley's friendly amendment, which is that the study will begin on Thursday, April 26.

Mr. Chair, I am confident that the witnesses will be ready on April 26. I know you have some concerns about it.

The Chair: I'm just concerned that if the planning session is on Tuesday, we couldn't have them there by Thursday. You still think they can be.

Fair enough. Go ahead.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: I do. I understand your concern and I recognize your concern, but I do believe we will have enough witnesses to make it a worthwhile meeting on April 26. It's consistent with Mr. Allen's suggestion to have a date to get started so that it's not hanging out there and we know exactly what we're shooting towards.

I would add that the analyst can add the wording he chooses, but I accept that friendly amendment in my motion. I would like to now put this motion before the committee for a vote.

The Chair: All right.

Technically a friendly amendment basically means that you accept a change that someone suggested and everybody else is okay with it and we don't need to have a separate debate on it. If there's any disagreement at all, then it has to be a formal amendment motion.

You were looking for language, though, were you not?

Mr. Andrew Saxton: No; I just wanted the analyst to figure out where to insert the wording for April 26 as the date to begin our study on the report.

The Chair: Okay. I'll look to our analyst for assistance. You're leaving the April 24 meeting in.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Perhaps after the word "study" there could be "and to begin on April 26".

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Point of order.

The Chair: I don't know about a point of order. I'll give you the floor, though.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Chair, there is a definite point of order. The friendly amendment, as it's being termed, is not in order because the mover of the primary motion cannot move a friendly amendment to his own motion unless he has unanimous consent—

The Chair: I know, exactly.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: —so there has to be a mover of an amendment, and that could only be done when that particular member has the floor.

I have asked to be on the speakers list. We cannot, at this point in time, consider what has to be considered the Shipley amendment because it has not been moved.

The Chair: Agreed. You just said what I said in different words.

If there's not unanimous consent, then it does not automatically form part of the original motion. If someone wants to amend it, they have to go through the formal motion; however, if somebody throws out an idea in their suggestion, as Mr. Shipley did, and the mover says he's okay with that, and everybody else says okay, then we'll amend the main motion very quickly, and then it's done.

We're not there yet, so I would ask you to hold your fire. I want to get us back to where we are.

Mr. Shipley, I see your hand. What would you like, sir?

• (1500)

Mr. Bev Shipley: It's about the amendment.

The Chair: I don't have an amendment yet.

I'll come back to you in a minute. I know you're not leaving.

Mr. Saxton, we last left it that you were looking for language that you might suggest as a friendly amendment. Do we have that language?

Go ahead.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I have two amendments, actually, that I would like to table.

The Chair: Let me test the floor on this one. If it collapses quickly, then.... You have the floor next anyway.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: That's correct.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Chair, if it helps the chair—

The Chair: That's what I'm waiting for. I don't have anything right now, so if you want me to move forward, give me something.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: I would be happy to assist the chair in finding that wording. After the word “study,” it would be “and that the first meeting to hear witness testimony be April 26”. That is, after the word “that”, which already exists, it would say “the first meeting to hear witness testimony be April 26, when the study is completed”, etc., as it already reads.

The Chair: Are you putting that out as what we call a friendly amendment? Are you trying that out?

Mr. Andrew Saxton: I'm trying that out.

I'd just like to add, though, that I find it very confusing why Mr. Byrne would oppose Mr. Shipley's suggestion of putting in a start date to hear witnesses. The whole purpose of putting this in is to expedite the process, so why is he trying to hold up the process?

The Chair: Hold on. I don't want to “over-technicalize” things, if that's a word, and it's probably not, but I don't yet have a full motion. We're kind of in flux right now. You have your main motion. You have the right to have it in front of the committee, and that's where it is, and now you're playing with language that may amount to a friendly amendment.

Let me just do a quick look-around.

I'm seeing a no right there, so that means we cannot do it that way, which means that someone else needs to move an amendment after they have the floor.

I see Mr. Shipley would like the floor. Mr. Shipley goes on the list.

The motion stands as originally read in, and you still have the floor, Mr. Saxton.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly hope that my colleagues in the opposition would recognize that this motion is consistent with everything they would like to do, and that is to get going as quickly as possible on the study of the AG's report on replacing Canada's fighter jets. I certainly hope they will support this motion so that we can move ahead.

The Chair: Thank you.

Again, I remind members that we are on the motion as you have it in front of you—no more, no less. It is not amended. It is as printed. That's what's in front of us. It is deemed to be moved. Mr. Saxton, the mover of that motion, has spoken to it, and I'm now moving to my speakers list.

At the top of the speakers list is Mr. Byrne. You have the floor, sir.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate all members stating that there is a need to move expeditiously on this.

Mr. Chair, I would like to move two amendments to the motion that is currently before us. The motion currently before us reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Public Accounts begin a study of the Spring 2012 Report of the Auditor General, beginning with Chapter 2 (Replacing Canada's Fighter Jets)....

My amendment would be to delete all words after that. The first amendment would replace those words with the following:

and that the Committee hold a planning session at the meeting of April 19, 2012,

—that's today—

and that the witness list include but not be limited to:

- François Guimont, Deputy Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada;
- Craig Morris, Deputy Director, F-35 Industrial Participation, Industry Canada;
- Richard Dicerni, Deputy Minister, Industry Canada;
- Johanne Provencher, Director General, Defence and Major Projects Directorate, Public Works and Government Services Canada;
- Tom Ring, Assistant Deputy Minister, Acquisitions Branch, Public Works and Government Services Canada;
- Col D.C. Burt, Director, New Generation Fighter Capability, National Defence;
- Michael J. Slack, F-35 Project Manager, Director of Continental Materiel Cooperation, National Defence;
- LGen J.P.A. Deschamps, Chief of the Air Staff, National Defence;
- Dan Ross, Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel), National Defence;
- Kevin Page, Parliamentary Budget Officer;
- Michael Ferguson, Auditor General of Canada; and

The second amendment would read as follows, Mr. Chair:

That witnesses appear as panels, with no more than two witnesses per panel, and each panel appear for a minimum of one hour; and that the Committee report its findings to the House of Commons.

● (1505)

The Chair: I have a question. I don't want to take the floor away from you.

Is it fair to say that the list you read out is exactly the same list that's in your motion—just for purposes of reference?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: With the addition, I believe, of the Deputy Minister of Public Works.

The Chair: Point of order, Madame Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I believe the amendment is out of order because it changes the intent of the original mover's motion, which is to have the planning meeting on Tuesday.

The Chair: I don't think so. I don't see them as being mutually exclusive. We can still go with that list. We can still meet on Tuesday and have a planning meeting, even if the committee decides there's no more planning that needs to be done.

I'm not seeing the point of order. I'm listening.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What you just said is not clear.

The Chair: What Mr. Byrne did was a very clever veteran's trick. What he did was move an amendment, which is in order. He made the substance of his amendment the substance of his motion, which is entirely in order.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I've gone further. I've actually added a second amendment, which would be that witnesses appear as panels, with no more than two witnesses per panel and each panel appearing for a minimum of one hour, and then the committee report its findings to the House of Commons.

The Chair: It's in order. I don't see anything out of order. It was a bit of a parliamentary sleight of hand, but it works and it's in order. The point of order is ruled deemed to be not a point of order.

Mr. Byrne, back to you.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I will continue. I'll try to be brief, Mr. Chair, because I want to get to this.

I think this is much more acceptable than having deputy ministers, with their own vested interests, deciding who will appear before this committee. That's what the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Public Works has said: it's on record that it's more appropriate for deputy ministers to decide who accompanies them at the table than for members of this committee. This is a much better method, and I think we'll get better answers as a result of the committee retaining its capacity to call witnesses who are directly involved in this issue, as opposed to just at the deputy minister level. It was, after all, Mr. Chair, the government—

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Byrne. There's a point of order from Madame Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Reference was made to the parliamentary secretary making an official statement or it being on the record. I would like to have reference to where that official reference is so I could double-check it and see it for myself.

The Chair: It's not a point of order.

Mr. Byrne can decide to acquiesce to your request or not.

If there is anything further you want to say, ask for the floor and I will give it to you. It is not a point of order.

Mr. Byrne, please continue.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: It will be in the blues at about the 48-minute mark of the meeting, I would suggest, Mr. Chair.

I was saying that this will be a much more helpful approach to take—that is, having the committee decide. I hope, Mr. Chair, that after weeks of potential preparation nobody came here without bullets in the holster, so to speak, without a witness list to present before us.

I'm proposing that this should be our planning session. Let's get to business. Let's get the job done. Let's get it done now.

I'll surrender the floor.

The Chair: Thank you.

Would you please work with your staff and the clerk to ensure that we have the proper wording of your amendment, please, while we move on to other speakers?

With that, we'll move on to the next speaker on my list.

Mr. Allen, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Thank you, Chair.

It's like listening to duelling banjos that are out of tune, to be perfectly frank.

The intention of coming here in the first place—and I will put my hand up as one of the signatories of the letter—was to get work done. We have now spent the better part of 70 minutes running around in a circle like a hamster on one of those wheels. Quite frankly, this does no service to the Canadian public. What I'm hearing from my colleagues in the other two parties is that they actually want to serve the Canadian public, and yet I do not see that happening.

What I'm looking to both of you to do, since we literally have duelling motions, is for both of you to somehow stop banging your heads together until you get flat spots, and get this work done.

We have offered a compromise. We are continuing to offer the compromise. If this is indicative of what we're going to be doing on Monday for another two hours, the chair is absolutely correct that it will not matter what we do on Tuesday. There will be no meeting on the 26th because we will still be arguing about how we're going to call witnesses and who's going to be on the list and how we do it. So for once, let the grown-ups—and I say that purposely—rule here and let's get on with the business of doing the business, because quite frankly this is not what we're about. I've sat on this committee for a number of years on and off. This is not what this committee was about before, but that's where we've gotten ourselves to today.

What I would suggest to my colleagues is that we agree on the substance of a motion that says we intend to start with chapter 2. We're all in agreement. Do we need to break these motions up into individual bite sizes so we can get unanimous consent? If I were to say that we all should start on the 26th, would we all agree? Let's just nod heads if we do. I think so. We've heard that already around the table.

The next piece is when do we want to start calling witnesses? We want to make sure they're on the 26th. Let's nod in agreement.

So let's do the next piece. Who? How many? Let's do that now.

The obvious one is the Auditor General. Let's do that now and let's bite-size this thing up, just like little bits, and get it done. This adding a layer of complexity to see which one can get the motion passed because they have ownership of the motion isn't getting us anywhere, so let us try to find a way to start this study next Thursday with a witness list we will eventually find unanimity around. Most of us would probably agree.

I heard my colleague across the way say the Auditor General is an obvious one. Kevin Page, the PBO, is an obvious one. The deputy ministers are obvious. I would hope he is also saying that if I have some folks that I believe would be of that level or of that calibre who have some involvement, indeed the government would say that's an interesting witness to hear from as well.

I would never expect the deputy minister to tell me what my witness list should be, just like I wouldn't tell the government what its witness list should be, and I haven't. I have my witness list, which is mine. I offer it up for discussion.

We need to move forward. We have 45 minutes, give or take a couple of minutes, to get through this. I would sincerely hope that, at the very least, we actually pass something today so that we can start next Thursday. Otherwise, we have simply delayed the process for no other good reason than that we could. That is not the intent of the three on this side of the House, who are saying to you, "Let's move forward."

We are in agreement on the 26th. Let's find a way to simply set aside the ownership of a motion, and get down to work. This is what Canadians have asked us to do. Let's get it done. Let's simply go do this.

I see a way through this. I think most of us see our way through this. Let's take the path. Let's get on the path and get it done. We can actually get this done. Surely to goodness we can manage that in a two-hour segment that Canadians are watching. They're watching us here. We don't get this big an audience. They're the biggest audience we've had for a long time.

• (1510)

Let's move forward with this. Give up ownership of your motions, gentlemen. I implore you to both do that. Let the committee have ownership of the motion in a holistic way and let's move forward.

I look to both of my colleagues, who I know want to move forward. I know they do. We all want to get there. Let's find a way to do that in a more harmonious way than where we're headed now, because we're literally headed nowhere, and that's not a good place for us to be headed, at the moment.

We're trying to find a way there. We're offering some light on the way there. Mr. Saxton has agreed with part of it. I appreciate his taking us up on the date. When I asked about when, they gave us a date, and they gave us a very appropriate date, I thought, very expeditious. We really appreciate that.

All I'm looking for now is that instead of saying we're going to delay all of the planning until Tuesday, let's start with some preliminary planning now, because we actually want to have a meeting on the Thursday. We can hammer out the rest—this person, that person, and all those other bits and pieces—on Tuesday. We're actually going to have to do that; we won't get it done today because we'll simply run out of time.

I thank you, Chair.

I apologize to my colleagues for maybe this angst that I feel, but it seems to me that we need to move forward and we need to do it quite rapidly.

• (1515)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Allen

Mr. Shipley, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Bev Shipley: I listened to Mr. Allen that we need to serve the Canadian public. Absolutely we do. We should have been doing this

a couple of weeks ago, when we had the opportunity. It was a choice at that time not to.

I find it interesting, in terms of moving ahead, that a colleague across the way from the Liberal Party, 65 minutes after the meeting has started...that it should be deemed now as a planning meeting when he had the opportunity of putting that motion forward.

As I said, this is about a committee to consider a study of chapter 2; there was no consideration at that time to even notify us that there would be a planning meeting. He chose not to let us know so that there would be some grandstanding, unfortunately, on the Liberal side, and maybe supported by the NDP, I'm not sure. We didn't sign the notice to have the meeting. So I'm not so sure that coming back two days ahead of a meeting has been in the best interest of the Canadian public in terms of spending for people to come.

So we need a way forward. Actually, I think we should get to the vote. The way forward is that we would take Mr. Saxton's motion that says we will start the study. We will have the planning meeting on the 24th. We will have witnesses on the 26th. That way, everyone has an opportunity to put their names forward. We then talk about the discussions, not dictated, quite honestly, by one person of this committee.

We take Mr. Allen's comments seriously that when we've been on this committee prior, we've worked well as a team. We're here to do the best for the country. We've done that by putting names forward. We each select out of it. Some we like, some we don't, but that's how it works so that we get both sides of the story. Then we talk about how they come forward so that actually as a committee we get the best value from those witnesses as they come forward—not dictated by one person at this time without the discussion or without the courtesy, quite honestly, of even letting us know that they wanted to have a planning meeting.

I suggest that we move forward on Mr. Saxton's motion. We have to deal with the amendments from my colleague across the way. We will deal with those. I suggest that we do and we get moving.

The Chair: Thank you. It's a good time to clarify the discussion.

We can't really put lines in the sand on these discussions, but technically, colleagues, just to keep everybody up to speed, Mr. Byrne attempted to move two amendments. Of course you can't do that; you can only move one. That actually is what's before us right now, the amendment with regard to the date and the witness list. I'm not going to confine the discussion to just that, because I don't think that's helpful, but I do want to remind everybody that when it comes time to start doing some voting, that's where we are. We are on the amendment to the motion. That is what we will ultimately vote on first, barring any amendments to the amendment, which could yet happen.

With that, Monsieur Dubé has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Actually, I am going to defer to your wisdom, Mr. Chair. I don't think I can do what I wanted to do, given what you just said. In the wake of everything my colleague Mr. Allen said so eloquently, when I added my name to the list of speakers, I wanted to propose Mr. Shipley's friendly amendment in the appropriate manner, even it meant doing so formally, if necessary. But in light of what you just said, I don't think I can do that just yet, since we are discussing Mr. Byrne's amendment.

[*English*]

The Chair: You can move an amendment to the amendment, which means you can take any part of what Mr. Byrne has said and you can offer a minor change or you can add a bit. It's an amendment to the amendment. That is open.

But right now, whether you agree or not, we are on the amendment, and that is what we will vote on.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: That is what I thought. Regardless, I have saved a bit of time by declaring my intention for later.

[*English*]

The Chair: Very good. Thank you.

Mr. Byrne, you have the floor again.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Since we're all in a big hurry to get this done, why don't we get in a big hurry and get this done? I don't see any reason why we have to move out of here at four o'clock. We have lots of time. Let's get this done.

I'm prepared to stay beyond the prescribed hour of 4 p.m. Let's hold our planning session right now. I think that's the smart thing to do so that we can get this work done. If there's any objection to that, then I think members can make that perfectly clear.

You've ruled, Mr. Chair, that there is one amendment before us and that it is as follows.... I won't read out the entire list of names, because that would be redundant, but it's that the committee hold a planning session at the meeting of April 19, 2012; that the various witness lists include but not be limited to—and then there are the 11 witnesses I have put forward; that witnesses appear as panels, with no more than two witnesses per panel; that each panel appear for a minimum of one hour; and that the committee report its findings to the House of Commons.

The Chair: I need to interject here.

My understanding from the clerk is that what you just said you wanted to do is a separate motion that's not part—

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I would have preferred, but if you're saying that it cannot be done as a separate motion—

The Chair: Yes, but now you want to take two of them and make them into one. You were okay in wanting to have two amendments; you just couldn't do them simultaneously.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I thought you had ruled one out of order.

The Chair: No, no. We can't have two motions in front of us at the same time unless they're fully stacked.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Now, since I have the floor, I will move the second motion.

The Chair: No, you won't.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Why is that?

The Chair: Because we haven't dealt with the first one.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Fair enough.

I'll suggest then, Mr. Chair, since the government has made its position abundantly clear, that no member of this committee should be surprised down the road if some of their witnesses who represent pay scales below deputy ministers are not called to this committee. There should be no weeping and gnashing of teeth if those witnesses who we feel could provide a substantial input into the study are not appearing before us. Ultimately, if you say that we're simply playing games, and that this is not a substantive argument, I disagree, because this is a substantive point about the process we're about to go through. If you can't have officials at lower pay scales than deputy ministers, we're not going to get to the bottom of all of this.

What has been suggested by Mr. Allen is that this is all nonsense, this is just games, and we should give it up and stop the games.

Everyone should understand, and as this thing evolves and those witnesses who provide value to this committee are not called before this committee because they're below the pay scale of deputy minister, they should not be surprised.

So why don't we just vote on my motion? Let's get this done.

The Chair: Thank you.

The next speaker on the list is Mr. Saxton.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to say that it was at Mr. Byrne's request that we all came here today at significant expense. I certainly hope we can get moving on the motion that is before the committee. It's not new to the committee. In fact it was introduced over two weeks ago, so every member of the committee has had a chance to review this particular motion.

If it complicates things to have an amendment, then I propose that we go ahead without an amendment. Nevertheless, I think we should just go ahead and vote on this motion, because it's very difficult to proceed.

The Chair: I'm sorry, when you say "this motion", do you mean the amendment? That's what is before us.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Yes. We should vote on the amendment before us so we can get to the motion.

The Chair: Fair enough. I just want to keep everybody lined up.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: In the interest of time and efficiency, we should move ahead on the voting on these amendments.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you.

I have no one further on the speakers list. The floor is open.

Seeing none, I will call for a vote on Mr. Byrne's amendment. Do we need it read out again?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Chair, I would like a recorded vote, if I could, please.

The Chair: Yes, you are entitled to a recorded vote.

A recorded vote has been requested and therefore it shall be ordered.

Before we vote, we'll have Mr. Allen.

• (1525)

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to make sure that we know exactly which piece it is, because you did rule that it was one or the other. Which one have you ruled is now before us?

The Chair: We are dealing with the part of Mr. Byrne's motion that is the witness list, and the second independent motion was one about appearing as panels. One is the makeup of the witness list. The other one is about how we proceed physically, and the motion, when we get to it, speaks to a specific way that we would hold our hearing.

Right now the motion is on what Mr. Byrne has read twice now and the attached witness list, which I can have read out if anyone wants that done. Otherwise, that is where we are.

Are you comfortable, Mr. Allen, or clear?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: If you could read me back—

The Chair: There is no way we're voting when anybody is ever in doubt.

Mr. Byrne, read it totally, please.

What you are about to hear is what we are voting on.

Mr. Byrne, read it in its entirety, please.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: The original motion, as proposed by Mr. Saxton, reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Public Accounts begin a study of the Spring 2012 Report of the Auditor General, beginning with Chapter 2 (Replacing Canada's Fighter Jets)....

My amendment is to delete all words after that, and replace them with:

and that the committee hold a planning session at the meeting of April 19, 2012, and that the witness list include but not be limited to François Guimont, Deputy Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada; Craig Morris, deputy director, F-35 industrial participation, Industry Canada; Richard Dicerni, Deputy Minister, Industry Canada; Johanne Provencher, director general, defence and major projects directorate, Public Works and Government Services Canada; Tom Ring, assistant deputy minister, acquisitions branch, Public Works and Government Services Canada; Colonel D.C. Burt, director, next-generation fighter capability, National Defence; Michael J. Slack, F-35 project manager, director of continental materiel cooperation, National Defence; Lieutenant-General J.P.A. Deschamps, Chief of the Air Staff, National Defence; Dan Ross, assistant deputy minister, materiel, National Defence; Kevin Page, Parliamentary Budget Officer; and Michael Ferguson, Auditor General of Canada.

For clarity, Mr. Chair, I will be moving a further amendment after we deal with this.

The Chair: Okay, hold it there. I'll come to you for that.

All right, it has been duly moved, debated, and repeated. I now call on the clerk to hold a formal roll call vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

The Chair: Thank you. I declare the amendment defeated by a vote of seven to four.

Mr. Byrne, you have the floor.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Recognizing the amendment was defeated, I would like to move the following amendment to Mr. Saxton's motion. His original motion read as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Public Accounts begin a study of the Spring 2012 Report of the Auditor General, beginning with Chapter 2 (Replacing Canada's Fighter Jets)....

Immediately following "(Replacing Canada's Fighter Jets)", all words would be deleted and the following would be put in:

and that the committee hold a planning session at the meeting of April 19, 2012, and that witnesses appear as panels, with no more than two witnesses per panel, and that each panel appear for a minimum of one hour, and that the committee report its findings to the House of Commons.

• (1530)

The Chair: Would you read the front piece again?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: The front piece of my amendment would read as follows:

and that the committee hold a planning session at the meeting of April 19, 2012, and that witnesses appear as panels, with no more than two witnesses per panel, and that each panel appear for a minimum of one hour, and that the committee report its findings to the House of Commons.

The Chair: All right, I will deem that motion in order. I will take challenges.

Hearing none, the motion is in order.

Mr. Byrne, did you wish to speak further?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I will, briefly, Mr. Chair.

We're all suggesting that we're here for the greater good, that we want to get this work done. Let's use whatever time is available, including the time after 4 p.m. today, to conduct this planning session to get the job done.

I will remind committee members that the order of witnesses is normally a prerogative of the chair. We do allow some latitude to our chair. We authorize him, and we give him great respect. Part of that process is actually allowing him to make a couple of simple decisions about the order of witnesses to the proceedings.

Let's get into our planning meeting. I am delighted, despite the fact that there were suggestions that we were not acting in good faith, that the NDP have now supported my original motion, which unfortunately was defeated, but I think we have the basis for our witness list. The NDP can come forward with a witness list and the government can come forward with a witness list. We can get the job done and be in business by 8:45 on Tuesday morning.

The Chair: Just help me understand where we have a witness list in front of us right now, given your amendment.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: We have a notional witness list as we conduct our planning session, because, Mr. Chair, my amendment calls for a planning session to be held today.

The Chair: Okay, fine. It's just that the way you worded it, I thought there was something in front of us that I was missing. But no, we don't yet have that in front of us.

We are on the amendment, and we are generating a speakers list.

After the mover of the motion, I have Mr. Saxton.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to move that we take this to a vote immediately.

The Chair: We can't do that.

Next. The floor is open.

I hear no one. This is the last opportunity to speak to this motion.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Chair, I would really like other members to stand up and say that it is very important that in the conduct of this inquiry we hear from bureaucrats who are below the pay grade of deputy ministers. Also, I would like to hear members express their intent to ensure that witnesses appear as panels so that there isn't a jockeying of eight or nine different witnesses appearing in a one-hour block at the exact same time with no capacity whatsoever to honestly and sincerely ask and receive questions and answers. This is an important part of the process.

If at the end of the day we are simply going to have the table stacked with four or five or eight witnesses at a time, with only an hour in which to testify, there will not be proper questions asked and there will not be proper answers given.

With that, you won't hear another word from me, but I just wish we could actually agree to that point. What is so terrible about that as a way to conduct our business?

The Chair: Thank you.

The floor is open to further debate.

Mr. Aspin.

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Chair, I believe Mr. Saxton's motion will allow for that.

Let's get on with the vote.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there further opinions? Is there anybody else who would like to get in on this?

Mr. Byrne.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Saxton's motion will allow for it, but the question is will it be allowed?

With that, let's get to a vote.

The Chair: The floor is open for further debate on the amendment.

Last call.

Hearing no debate, I'll place the motion before us. Is everybody clear on the amendment?

Very good. Everyone is ready.

Let's stay with what we've been doing all day and do a quick roll call vote so that there is no doubt as to how things are being determined.

Hearing no objections, I will direct the clerk to begin a formal roll call vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

• (1535)

The Chair: I declare the amendment defeated, seven to four.

The main motion is now back before us and the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Bev Shipley: I would propose an amendment, I guess, since "friendly" doesn't work, to the original motion by Mr. Saxton as written by the analyst when we tried to make a friendly amendment.

I believe it would start in after the word "study"—

The Chair: That word is in there twice. Is it the "study" in the second-last sentence?

Mr. Bev Shipley: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Bev Shipley: After "study, and that", it would say, "the first meeting to hear witness testimony be on April 26, 2012".

Just so we're clear, it's....

The Chair: Bev, the clerk is going to come over here to make sure we have it clear.

Madam Clerk, I'll ask you to read out the amendment as you understand it.

I will then look to Mr. Shipley for agreement that it is correct, or I'll ask him to make corrections, and then I'll look for agreement from everyone else that they understand.

Madam Clerk.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Joann Garbig): Perhaps I could read the motion with the amendment incorporated and alert the members as to when the new wording comes in.

The motion of Mr. Saxton would then read as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Public Accounts begin a study of the Spring 2012 Report of the Auditor General, beginning with Chapter 2 (Replacing Canada's Fighter Jets), and that the committee hold a planning session at the meeting of April 24, 2012, to determine the witness list and agenda for the study, and that

—here is the new wording—

the first meeting to hear witness testimony be on April 26, 2012,

—and then we resume the wording of the original motion—

and that when the study is completed the committee report its finding to the House of Commons.

The Chair: All right.

Bev, you're good?

Does everybody understand it? We're not looking for agreement yet. Does the committee understand the amendment?

Very well. The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Shipley, do you wish to speak any further?

Mr. Bev Shipley: I don't.

The Chair: You're good? All right.

The floor is open.

Mr. Byrne.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Chair, I think we should be using this time today. We have lots of time to do the planning session today. We all flew here, or drove here, or took trains to get here today. We have time on our hands today. Why don't we conduct the planning session today?

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there further speakers?

Mr. Kramp, you want the floor? Go ahead.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Certainly I don't want to get into a peeing match across the floor here at this stage, but I remind all my colleagues that there have been a number of filibusters and delays on this committee, and this never once came from the government. If we want to get on with things, then let's make some decisions and vote and get to work. That simply means....

Today was not called for a planning session. Today was called for permission to study the issue. This was the motion put forward. Now we've suggested that we need to move forward and we need to get at the planning, get it over with, get it done. This message says do that.

I'm certain Mr. Allen would understand that we can move forward with this. We could have been doing this two weeks ago, but we were delayed with more filibuster. Let's just get to work and pass this motion so that we can have our planning session and call our witnesses in. I'm confident that we can have the number of witnesses necessary to certainly start our planning session and put everything in order.

I will actually agree with Mr. Byrne on a few things. The last thing we need is to have a whole group of witnesses coming in here, eight or nine witnesses at one point, and not be able to dig down and drill down when we should and when we need to. That is why it's very important that we have a very effective planning session with the witnesses that we want there, to put our strategy in place and effectively produce results for this committee.

So let's just go forward with it. Stop all the gamesmanship and get to work today. Let's just vote on this thing, go to our planning session, have our witnesses in, and do what we should be doing. It is that simple. Why we just keep dragging this out and dragging this out....

The frustration level is there for all of us. Surely we can get beyond the gamesmanship here and just get to work.

Thank you.

The Chair: I just want to point out to members to give some consideration, in the course of their debate, as to what we do with the DND hearing that is scheduled for next Tuesday. I hear it wasn't the intent of the government to cancel it, but rather to defer it.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Yes, just to defer it.

The Chair: But at some point—I'm just pointing out some loose ends here—we'll need to know what to do with that.

Again, I am imploring from the chair that if there can be agreement on even one or two witnesses today, it just increases the odds that we'll actually have a productive meeting next Tuesday. Otherwise we're back to the 24-hour notice again. I can't do it unilaterally. All I can do is implore colleagues to consider these things as they take up the debate, which we are now continuing.

Mr. Saxton, you have the floor.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We all came back here today at Mr. Byrne's insistence in order to deal with the motions before the committee.

The committee voted ten to one to deal with the motion, the one against being Mr. Byrne. The one fellow who brings us back here, at great expense, votes against dealing with the motion that's before the committee. I think that speaks volumes to where he's going with this.

Mr. Chair, I suggest that we now vote on this motion and move forward.

The Chair: A suggestion I can take.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: I'm making a friendly suggestion, Mr. Chair —

The Chair: No, it's not friendly; it's just a suggestion.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: —that we stop playing to the games of Mr. Byrne, which are becoming clearer the more he talks. Let's just get moving on with the business of this committee, which has worked very well in the past.

I've been on this committee for three and a half years. We've done some very good work on this committee. It's different now that we have a member such as Mr. Byrne on the committee, but we're dealing with it.

I suggest that we now move on and vote on this motion.

The Chair: I caution the personal comments. You were close there. I don't want to see anybody get that close again.

The floor is open for further debate.

Mr. Byrne.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm kind of glad I rattle the chains of the government, because that's what the public accounts committee is supposed to be all about. It is supposed to hold the government to account. I don't apologize for asking for this meeting and having other members support it. But he's quite right; Mr. Saxton has pointed out that I do stand alone here in many respects calling this government to account. And I do appreciate the fact that we have time on our hands and that to not use that time effectively and use this as a planning session, quite frankly, is a waste of resources. I really believe very strongly that we should be using this time today as a planning session so we can get to work.

I'm glad the NDP in the recorded vote did indeed vote with my motions and say that there were requirements, that there was value to the witnesses I brought forward. I recognize now that the government is saying that disharmony is being created by the Liberal Party of Canada representative on the committee because I actually want this committee to hear witnesses quickly and I want to have a full list of witnesses. I make no apologies for that.

Now, Mr. Chair, with that said, I think we can walk and chew gum at the same time. Yes, this is not a planning session, but we can make it a planning session if we so choose. But apparently we do not choose to, so let's get on with the vote.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you.

The floor is open for debate. This is the last call.

Hearing no one, I close debate on the amendment and I will put the amendment to the committee.

Is there anyone who doesn't understand the amendment and would like it read out again?

Hearing no one, once again I will call on the clerk to give us a formal recorded vote. Madam Clerk.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

The Chair: The amendment is carried.

Is there further business?

Mr. Allen.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Chair, I'm assuming we're now going back to the motion as amended. If I'm correct on that, I would like to now speak to the motion as it has now just been amended.

The Chair: That amendment carried. We now have the main motion as amended. That's where we are.

Does everybody understand where we are? The amendment carried. The main motion is now amended. The main motion is now back before the committee.

Mr. Allen has the floor. Please continue.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Thank you, Chair.

As much as we're part-way there, we are not the whole way there, and let it not be left unsaid that what we were invited to today was not a planning meeting.

Are we prepared, as New Democrats, as the official opposition? Yes.

Am I disappointed that my counterparts across the way aren't prepared to have a planning meeting today? Yes.

We have seasoned veterans on that side of the table who would have known the process and could have acted accordingly, and we actually could have moved forward today.

So my expectation, Chair—and I say this only as an expectation—is that at four o'clock the government will look to adjourn and look for a planning meeting on April 24. So I would move the following amendment to the main motion, beginning with the third line, where it says “and that the committee hold a planning session at the meeting of April 24”: that the session be held open and in public, not in camera.

The Chair: That is, “hold a planning session at the meeting of April 24, 2012, and that it be held in public”.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: That's correct.

The Chair: I will take that as an amendment. That amendment is in order.

Are there any challenges? Do you challenge that?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I will be supporting that amendment.

The Chair: That's wonderful.

Does anybody want to challenge it? No.

Therefore the amendment is duly in front of the committee. Mr. Allen, you have the right to speak to it further, if you wish.

• (1550)

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Clearly, Chair, the reason I've asked for this to happen is that the government has acquiesced today. Normally committees can go in camera or not. It's their decision to make. The government decided that it wanted to have an open and public meeting today, and that's gratifying from our side.

Clearly, we're going to be talking about people we call for witnesses. We're not talking about personnel issues, where there are breaches of privacy. These are public figures we're asking to call, and the debate is around the merit of whether one witness should be called versus another, or indeed what is the merit. As Mr. Kramp quite ably pointed out earlier, if I propose a particular witness X, and I put forward a good case for witness X, the government would say “Let's call witness X”. There aren't any privacy issues around these individuals that need to be hidden away.

Seeing the efforts of my colleagues in the other two parties over this issue of whether it will be limited or it will not be limited, what I would say to the government side is that the way to prove that you don't intend to limit the witness list or try to curtail a full and wholesome piece is not to go in camera, but to go in the public view. Therefore no one will be bound by that confidentiality and will be faced with the optics—and I say this to my friends over the way—of perhaps having done something that was untoward, because statements get made that aren't wholly accurate because they are made in a political context. So you may have actually done something well in camera, but no one would actually know you did it well because you did it in camera and no one can speak to it.

This is the way to move forward. Your planning meeting will be on Tuesday. Clearly, you've determined that's the day you want to have it, as much as I was prepared and my colleagues were prepared over here to do it today. I would have preferred to do it today, and as Mr. Byrne said earlier, I'm willing to stay. I'm here for however long it takes to get it done, if that is the wish of folks, but seeing there probably isn't going to be acquiescence from the other side, then I would simply ask them to support the amendment so that we can actually show that indeed we just simply hammered out a witness list, we hammered out a plan, and we got it to full completion in the public view. Folks will see what the arguments are. There won't be any worry about who said what in camera. It will be absolutely open.

Folks will then take from that what they want because they will have witnessed it, rather than us on the committee going behind closed doors and hammering out a witness list. We all know if there is somebody not on my list or someone else's list, the conjecture will start about why that person is not there, whereas we might have all unanimously agreed after a discussion that "You know what, Malcolm? You don't need that particular person on the list", and I said, "You know what? You're right, Mr. Kramp; I don't." We'd never be able to say that.

If it is held in public view and Mr. Kramp makes a valid argument as to why I shouldn't call witness X, and I say "You know, Mr. Kramp, you're right", people are going to see me say that Mr. Kramp was right. That is fair to both parties in this endeavour.

I want to relinquish the floor, Chair, because I do want to actually finish this business. I will relinquish the floor.

The Chair: Thank you.

The floor is open for further debate. Last call...

Hearing none, as per our procedure I will ask the clerk to do the roll call vote. Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: The question is on the amendment by Mr. Allen.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

• (1555)

The Chair: The amendment by Mr. Allen is defeated.

The floor is open for further debate on the main motion as amended. Last call.

Hearing no one, I'll declare discussion and debate on the motion as amended concluded, and we will now move to a formal recorded vote on the motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We have five minutes.

Before I go to you, Mr. Saxton, that motion has now eliminated the public hearing on Tuesday. You have the schedule in front of

you. We have the time now. Is it the pleasure of the committee to make a determination on what date that is moved to so when the clerk contacts all these people it is with one message: that the meeting on Tuesday is cancelled and it is rescheduled for such-and-such a date? Are we able to do that today or not, colleagues?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Chair, this is not a planning session, apparently.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kramp.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I would suggest that we should not set a date now, in that I think we all recognize that there will be more than one hearing on the F-35. It could extend for a while, so let's just see how that evolves so we are then able to reschedule. If we put a time in now, we might want that for additional hearings on the F-35, so it should be delayed until the committee sees that we have come to a conclusion on that study and then we can move forward with our other issues of business then.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Saxton.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree with my colleague Mr. Kramp. We should hold off on that decision until we know exactly what dates are available.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'd like to move that we adjourn the meeting today.

The Chair: I have a motion that's in order.

Do you have a point of order?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: No.

The Chair: What do you have?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: I have a motion I'd like to move.

The Chair: I'm sorry. If this fails and we continue, I will give you the floor, but right now we have a proper motion in front of us that I have to put to the committee, which is always in order when someone has the floor. It's a motion to adjourn the meeting. That motion is in order. It's not debatable.

You have the right to a recorded vote. There will be a formal recorded vote on this motion to adjourn.

Madam Clerk.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: Thank you, colleagues.

By a vote of seven to four, we have agreed to adjourn the meeting two minutes before the scheduled adjournment.

Thank you, all.

This meeting does indeed stand adjourned.

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