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Standing Committee on International Trade

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Thursday, February 4, 2016



Chair

The Honourable Mark Eyking

Standing Committee on International Trade

Thursday, February 4, 2016

• (0850)

[Translation]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Rémi Bourgault): Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

[English]

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

[Translation]

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

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

[English]

I'm ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): I move that Mark Eyking be chair.

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

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Eyking duly elected chair of the committee, and I invite Mr. Eyking to take the chair.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair (Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.)): I'm honoured and humbled to be your chair. Many of you know my background. I've been here 15 years with some of you. I have been on many committees. I co-chaired many committees. As many of you know this is going to be a very important committee for government, the people of Canada, and the world. We're going to be active and we're going to be meeting a lot of people. I'm going to be fair in what I do, and I'm going to be punctual most of the time, and sometimes maybe I'll be more lenient if it's an important topic.

I won't get into that now. I think right now I'm going to pass it over to the clerk to continue because we still need two vice-chairs. Is everybody agreed that we pass it over to the clerk?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Good.

[Translation]

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

[English]

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

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): I nominate Randy Hoback, please.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Dhaliwal that Mr. Hoback be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

I declare the motion carried and Mr. Hoback duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

[English]

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

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

[Translation]

I am now ready to receive motions for the second vice-chair.

[English]

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): I nominate Tracey Ramsey.

The Clerk: It is moved by Mr. Peterson that Ms. Ramsey be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Thank you, Clerk.

Congratulations to the vice-chairs. Sometimes I might not be here and I will need you to step in. I'll give you my personal cellphone number in case you ever need to call me or if you have questions. I'd appreciate it if I could have your personal number so that I can call you in case I can't be here. That would be a good way to start.

Even though I've been at hundreds of committee meetings, I'm still new as chair, so I won't mind if someone corrects me on procedure. I'm sure the clerk will keep an eye on things.

There are two things I would like to see done today, and the first is routine motions. We have many new MPs here, but we also have many people new to the trade committee. Most committees, after electing their chair and vice-chairs, start off with routine motions. Routine motions effectively set the template for how we are supposed to operate through this Parliament. If we can get through the routine motions all right, I'd like to get some idea of our first meetings.

But we'll get to that later.

My understanding is that there are a couple of different ways to deal with routine motions. I see about 10 motions here. We'll go through them, somebody will make a motion, and then we can pass them. Either I can go through them or they can come from the floor.

How shall we proceed, Clerk? Do we start with—

• (0855)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Why don't we do it from the floor?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: To get it started, I'll move the first motion, which deals with the services of analysts from the Library of Parliament. I move:

That the Committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the Chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist it in its work.

The Chair: Does everybody agree?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We'll go to motion two.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: With regard to the subcommittee on agenda and procedure, I move that the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be composed of five members including the chair, the two vice-chairs and two members of the government; quorum of the subcommittee shall consist of at least three members, one of whom shall be one from the government, one from the opposition; one member of the subcommittee shall be permitted to have one assistant attend any meetings of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure; and in addition, each party shall be permitted to have one staff member from the House officer attend any meetings.

The Chair: Mr. Hoback, go ahead.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Thank you.

Mr. Eyking, you've been here 15 years. I've been here seven or eight years.

I've been on committees that had subcommittees and on committees that didn't. I found that with the committees that had subcommittees, they'd go through, figure out a schedule, and debate it amongst themselves in the subcommittee. That might tie up a meeting. Then they'd bring it back to the committee and all of a sudden they'd spend another meeting having the exact same debate all over again.

My suggestion is that we do not have a subcommittee, and that the committee as a whole take on the task of what we're going to do in future.

That would be my proposal.

The Chair: We can get more comments, but I agree with you, Mr. Hoback. I've seen it. If you have a good working committee, you don't need the subcommittee. Many times it comes up all over again; you're right.

If there's no more comment on it, we can leave out the part about the subcommittee.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Do you want to make an amendment?

Mr. Randy Hoback: I guess we just vote down that part of the motion, is that correct? Or we withdraw it and just don't place it?

The Chair: We'd still need one for the rest, though, wouldn't we?

Mr. Randy Hoback: We still have to do quorum, but that would be separate.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Why don't you amend it?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Could we do a friendly amendment that we have no subcommittee on agenda and procedure?

The Chair: Does everybody agree?

Mr. Kyle Peterson: They're each independent motions, so I think procedurally it would be cleaner if Mr. Dhaliwal simply withdrew that motion, which would be number two here, instead of.... It's not really an amendment, I don't think.

The Chair: It's whatever we have to do, Clerk; we just don't need a subcommittee.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Can I speak to it, too?

• (0900)

The Chair: Yes, keep going.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Chair, as you know, there are some new members and some have experience. My understanding, when I was here in previous parliaments, was because the subcommittee sets the agenda, you as a chair stay away from that. The whole idea was that it's a non-partisan thing.

The Chair: No, I don't think so. The chair was part of it, wasn't it?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: That was just a comment.

The Chair: Okay.

(Motion withdrawn)

The Chair: Let's go to another one.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): For meeting without a quorum, I move:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least three (3) members are present, including one member from the government and one member of the official opposition; and that in the case of previously scheduled meetings taking place outside the Parliamentary precinct, the Committee members in attendance shall only be required to wait for 15 minutes following the designated start of the meeting before they may proceed to hear witnesses and receive evidence, so long as one member of the government and one member of the opposition is present.

The Chair: It's just a procedural thing that a meeting can't start unless two people are here.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Good morning everyone.

The fourth motion deals with the time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses.

The motion state that all witnesses, regardless of their organization, be entitled to 10 minutes to make their opening statement.

Would you like me to read in full the part of the motion on the time allocated and the order of questioners?

The first round will be as follows: Conservative Party, 6 minutes; Liberal Party, 6 minutes; NDP, 6 minutes; Liberal Party, 6 minutes. The second round will be as follows: Liberal Party, 6 minutes; Conservative Party, 6 minutes; Liberal Party, 6 minutes; Conservative Party, 5 minutes; and finally, NDP, 3 minutes. That's 50 minutes in total.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I have no problem with the first part of it so that if you have two or fewer witnesses, they have 10 minutes each. That's fair. If you have more, then I think going to eight minutes is fair. I think that's appropriate.

I also want to make sure the chair has some liberty there, so that if he needs to put a fourth witness in there, he can break the time up to make the committee function so that we respect the fact that witnesses travel in from all across Canada. Sometimes you get votes in the middle of the day. With something like that, you want to do what you can to make sure they may utilize their time. I have no problem giving the chair a little bit of leeway on that, whether it's formally or informally.

What I think we might want to change is the rotation by time. I would propose that we go six minutes in the first and second rounds. I'm a little confused. You have the NDP going first here for seven minutes, and then you get the Conservatives going for seven minutes, and the Liberals only going for five minutes.

A voice: No, it's six minutes.

The Chair: No, we have "six" here. I don't know if you have the right copy.

An hon. member: No, we don't.

An hon. member: Is that the first page?

The Chair: No.

An hon. member: We don't have that one.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: The proposal is different from last year's.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Okay. My apologies.

The Chair: Sorry. There are new proposals. That's why they're coming here. It's pretty well on, what you're saying.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Basically, you're looking at six minutes, just to clarify.

The Chair: It's six minutes for the first round.

Mr. Randy Hoback: It's six minutes for the second round, so everybody gets six minutes, basically, and then there would be an NDP at the end, if there's time, for three minutes.

One thing I was looking at, Chair, is the actual order of the questioning. Right now, if I read it right, it would be Conservative, Liberal, NDP, Liberal; then Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, NDP. I would almost propose that, since you do have the majority, that the Liberal go first, so you'd go Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Liberal; then Conservative, Liberal, Liberal, Conservative. That way you'd have the rotation through, and you wouldn't have Liberals back to back, and the government would have the first chance at witnesses.

•(0905)

The Chair: For some reason, the opposition was always first out of the gate. Maybe it's in case.... I don't know. You know how up here sometimes there are votes, and you get these witnesses? I don't know if that was the reason that the opposition was always the first to get a question. You know how it goes. All of a sudden, we just get going.

I don't think, as the chair, that the Liberals would mind going first, but I think there was a reason why the official opposition went first. It's just because many times there's an interruption, so at least they get their question in. That's the only reason I think it's there, but if you guys want to change it, that would be up to the rest, of course.

Mr. Randy Hoback: We have no issues. All I'd do, then, is suggest that, just so you don't have the Liberals back-to-back, when you finish off the second round with the Liberal, we leave the first round the same: Conservative, Liberal, NDP, Liberal. Start the second round off with a Conservative, then Liberal, Conservative, Liberal.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Either we leave it like this—

Sorry, go ahead.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): I would like to have the opportunity to speak, as well, in the second round. I don't want to be cut out of that second round.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: You're not. You will still have that.

Mr. Randy Hoback: You'd be the third place.

The Chair: Do you see where you're in the second round?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Okay, yes. Sorry, it was just that the way he just read it, he didn't say the NDP at the end.

Mr. Randy Hoback: That's my mistake.

The Chair: Before it used to be the NDP. The Liberals, when we were there, didn't get the second round, but I think now the NDP's getting a place.

Go ahead, Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Hoback's suggestion was to change it. I think it's better if we leave it this way right now, because then everybody has a chance to speak. Sometimes, what happens is, if we move those Liberals and Conservatives around, it might not be fair according to the representation that we have.

This way, everybody gets...even the NDP. If I look at the previous Parliaments, it's my understanding that the third party did not have the second round. It's pretty fair to all parties.

I would propose that we leave the motion as it is.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I'm okay with that.

The Chair: It's not a big deal.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I just want to confirm what we're doing, then. We'd go round one, Conservative, six minutes; Liberal, six minutes; NDP, six minutes; Liberal, six minutes. We'd go into round two with Liberal, six minutes; Conservative, six minutes; Liberal, six minutes; and Conservative, five minutes or six minutes?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Five minutes.

Mr. Randy Hoback: So it's five minutes, and the NDP, three minutes.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Yes, five, and the NDP, three.

The Chair: Okay, because there's a total of 50 minutes that we always try to keep.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I'd like to see everybody get at least six minutes, and this way, the Conservatives are the only party that doesn't get six minutes. The third person wouldn't get a full six minutes.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Hoback, in the previous Parliaments the way I saw it was that the first round was six minutes and the second round was usually four minutes, or something like that. This way, at least it's pretty fair.

Mr. Randy Hoback: It does give every Liberal member six minutes, and it doesn't give every Conservative member six minutes. It also gives the NDP nine minutes.

I just want to give everybody six minutes. That's all I'm asking. If we still have to stick to that 50 minute timetable, I think—

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: I think, in this one, the way I see it is that we are giving more time to the official opposition, and we are also giving three additional minutes to the NDP.

I would like to see this go as it is, but it's going to be at the discretion of the chair, because we can run pretty non-partisan. Just in case it goes to the parties and things, I would like to see this go the way it is right now. At least, with the NDP, if we run out of time, the NDP probably won't have that time for the next round.

The Chair: If I may comment, I don't know if it makes a big difference, but I think that this committee's going to have a lot of witnesses, so you might find that round one is with one group of witnesses and round two might be another group or something.

The thing I like about this is that the NDP gets a crack at the next...you know, because sometimes with witnesses in that round, you're going to get the questions in.

I'm going to be flexible. If a topic's going well, if it's a topic that we've never heard, just because you ask a question—I'm just using this situation—and nobody thought about the question, it's a really good one, and we have a witness who's on a good roll, I'm not going to be putting the hammer down. I'm just letting you know the way I operate, that's all.

It's in the hands of the committee as to whether they're going to agree with this or have to vote on this, or what you're going to do with it.

• (0910)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Chair, can I give you a little background on the makeup of the House? The make up of the House is that Liberals are 56.3%, the Conservatives are 30.3%, and the NDP is 13.5%. When I look at the percentage of time allocated, the Liberals are only allocated 48%, the Conservatives are allocated 34%, and the NDP are allocated 17%. If we go with that representation in the House, the official opposition and the NDP are better off than the number of minutes we have, and I would like to see this motion go through as it is.

The Chair: Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Can I make a proposal that we change the end? Then in round two, in spot four, we go to the Conservatives for six minutes and the NDP for two minutes because that NDP member will have more time than any of the existing members there.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Hoback, if we look at it this way, because we are giving them 13.5%, they get 3.5% more, and at 30.3%—you are getting almost 3.7% more according to representation.

Let's leave it as it is, and I'm sure the chair will be very cordial and will not cut us off within 30 seconds this way or that way, as is his discretion.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: I support it as it stands as well. I support what you have there with the time allotted.

The Chair: Okay, can we vote on this?

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Chair, I would like us to keep to the method of allocating time on the basis of the seats we hold in the House of Commons, as was proposed. And I think we have already been very generous in terms of allocating time, for that matter.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I'm not asking to take away time from the government. I'm just asking that you reallocate opposition so that everybody gets—

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: We want to be fair to every party. We want to be fair to the NDP as well. The way we see it, Mr. Hoback... You know that it is at the discretion of the chair to be half a minute this way or that way, but just—

Mr. Randy Hoback: It's not fair because everybody around this table gets six minutes except for one Conservative member. This is not fair.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: If you look at the makeup of the House, it is.

Mr. Randy Hoback: In fact, one member gets nine minutes.

The Chair: If I may, Mr. Hoback—

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Two Liberal members don't get to speak at all, so everybody around the table does not get the six minutes. Are you proposing that the Liberals get six times six minutes? That's the logical conclusion.

The Chair: I was just going to bring that up. One of you guys is not going to be speaking each day.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Then, of course, the parliamentary secretary will want to speak once in a while.

The Chair: All in favour of this motion—did somebody make a motion?

A voice: It's been moved.

The Chair: Oh, sorry, yes. All in favour?

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Can I just suggest that if we agree, let's just try to work as unanimously as possible and save votes only when we have vehement disagreement. In my previous experience in public accounts, I found the more we could agree unanimously and save votes for issues where we had no other option... Consensus is always better.

The Chair: The clerk brought up a good point. We've seen many meetings where you're lucky to get through all this, but sometimes it starts again, so he made a good suggestion that we have to add in there—go ahead, Clerk.

The Clerk: This is just an example from the motion you had in the committee last year. It said:

...if time permits, further rounds shall repeat the pattern of the first two at the discretion of the Chair.

At the moment, there is nothing at all in the—

The Chair: We should add that. You never know, you might have to go around—

● (0915)

Mr. Randy Hoback: That would give your members an opportunity to speak in the third round.

The Chair: That's right.

Thank you, Clerk.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I'd just like to make sure that I understand. We are indeed saying that "if time permits, further rounds shall repeat the pattern of the first two at the discretion of the chair". Is that correct?

The Clerk: Precisely.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Very well. Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Exactly.

The Clerk: Since nobody proposed an amendment to do that, can I just include it as part of the first motion instead of having it as an amendment?

The Chair: Sure.

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

The Chair: Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: The next motion is the distribution of documents. I move:

That only the Clerk of the Committee, with adequate notice, be authorized to distribute to the members of the Committee any documents, including motions, and that all documents which are to be distributed amongst the committee members must be in both official languages and that the Clerk shall advise all witness appearing before committee of this requirement.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one is working meals. Is there a motion?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: I move:

That the Committee authorize the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the Chair, to make the necessary arrangements to provide for working meals.

The Chair: As people who have been on this committee may know, we are in a good slot until spring, since we meet Tuesday mornings and Thursday mornings. However, we might have situations in which we'd be here at lunchtime and we might have special meetings in the evening. That means they bring in food and make sure the witnesses get fed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): On travel, accommodation, and living expenses of witnesses, I move:

That, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses, not exceeding two (2) representatives per organization; and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Can I just add to that?

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I don't know if you want to make this part of the formal motion. We should try to utilize television as much as possible. Instead of flying witnesses in for five or 10 minutes, they could go to their local facility where we could have them come on camera.

The Chair: That has worked in the past.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Again, it's just trying to keep our costs down and respecting taxpayers' money. I don't know whether you want to put it in a motion or if it's just the way you want to operate, Chair. It would be my advice to do that when and if possible.

The Chair: Can we put that in there?

The Clerk: Otherwise, we could leave it to the discretion of the chair.

The Chair: I'll leave it to my discretion.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I'm happy with that.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Do you want to do the next one?

Mr. Dan Albas: The next one is access to in camera meetings. I move that, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to have one staff member present from their office and from their party at in camera meetings; and in addition each party shall be permitted to have one staff member from a House officer attend in camera meetings.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Please keep going.

Mr. Dan Albas: I also move:

That in camera meetings be transcribed and that the transcription be kept with the Clerk of the Committee for later consultation by members of the Committee or their designated staff member.

The Chair: We could use clarification here. Does everybody reads this as meaning that we are all allowed to bring one person, not two people?

The clerk just wanted clarification, because you could read it both ways.

Mr. Randy Hoback: It would be one person. Each party has one individual. It would be one here, and then one person from the Conservative Party.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: There would be one from the whip's office. This is what I understood, but the whip's office is from the second one.

The Chair: The second line says that.

• (0920)

Mr. Randy Hoback: That's the way I understand it. It's one person.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: It doesn't read right now that each member could have two staff members. I think it was meant to be "or" as opposed to "and".

The Chair: I think this one is a little convoluted.

We could go with the old one; it's clearer.

The Clerk: This was the old one. This is something that could perhaps fix it.

The Chair: Why don't you try this one, Randy? Try that one there. It clarifies it. It's a little bit tighter.

Mr. Randy Hoback: This is the suggestion from the clerk. I move that:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be permitted to have one (1) staff member in attendance at any in camera meeting; and that one (1) staff member from each party also be permitted to attend any in camera meeting.

I think that's pretty straightforward.

The Chair: Okay.

Thank you, Randy.

The Chair: Clerk, go ahead.

The Clerk: Can I record it as two different motions, then?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motions agreed to)

The Chair: Yes.

Notice of motions....

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): I move:

That forty-eight (48) hours notice shall be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the Committee; that the motion shall be filed and distributed to members by the clerk in both official languages; and that completed motions that are received by 4:00 p.m. shall be distributed to members the same day.

The Chair: That's pretty straightforward. There's no problem.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The last one, is about the minister.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: For minister appearance, I move:

That whenever a minister appears before the Committee, every effort should be made in order for the meeting to be televised.

I'm sure the official opposition will be very happy to see that.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Ministers are usually pretty good if you give them a heads-up of long enough. It's usually an hour, and that's the way it goes.

Is there any other housekeeping on routine procedures?

There are a couple of things. Sometimes when you're new here.... I remember it took me a while to ask what in camera means. In camera means that it's amongst ourselves.

Is that right, clerk?

• (0925)

The Clerk: Yes.

The Chair: The other thing, and maybe the clerk can give us a few pointers on this, has to do with what we are allowed to say to the media and what we are not allowed to say.

Does anything we say in here have to stay in here? Yes. There's no tweeting, no texting, no talking. When we're in camera it's amongst ourselves, but it is recorded.

The Clerk: It's recorded. I receive the transcripts. For instance, for one of the motions of Mr. Albas that I divided, I receive the blues. It's kept in my office and it's only to be seen by the members or one of the designated staff based on the motion that was adopted. It's not public and it's not distributed to anybody.

I keep it because sometimes it could happen that I have to refer to it to make sure that the minutes of the committee will reflect exactly what was mentioned or what was adopted. It's especially helpful when there is a draft report debated. If there was a change in the wording or something, we keep track and the analysts keep track. Sometimes it's really good to be able to refer to the transcript in order to make sure that it reflects the discussion. Since nothing can be published outside, the transcript is kept by the clerk.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I have a question on that for clarification for me and for others here. Is that held for five years? It's not ATI-able, is it?

The Clerk: I think it's more than five years. I will have to check the agreement with the archives, but it would be archived. I could be wrong, but I think it's close to 20 or 30 years, something like that, and then it's released.

If you want, I can double-check the agreement with the archives to make sure that I have the exact dates.

Mr. Randy Hoback: The point I want to make is that it is archived and that it will show up somewhere in the future, so your kids or grandkids may read it.

The Chair: It's just that sometimes you hear something or whatever, and it's confidential here, because it can create animosity. It could be an honest mistake, but it goes the wrong way and it becomes frictional amongst us all.

The Clerk: If I could add to that, Mr. Chair, there will be that transcript, and the minutes of the committee for that in camera meeting will only reflect the motion adopted. The minutes won't say who proposed it or who voted yea or nay, and that's only if it's agreed to. If it's defeated, it won't be there at all.

The Chair: It's a good thing. We know that we can all speak freely without a problem.

Are there any other questions about procedure?

There's a couple of things about witnesses. These are little things that I've seen over the years. If we are going to bring in witnesses, or you have suggestions.... Let's say the topic is softwood lumber and you have a witness in your area. That's very important. We will come up with witness lists, but timing is important in getting your person, or company, or whoever it is on the list, because we want to make sure if they're doing a presentation that it's in both languages. It has to be in both languages. It's not a problem if they're from New Brunswick, Quebec, or anywhere, but sometimes we might have a witness coming in from California, and if they're doing a presentation, we want to get their stuff.

These are little things that can happen, but it's very important that if we're going to run smoothly, translation has to be done properly. It's also important for the translators, because sometimes you have witnesses who speak fast and the translators don't have the script. These are all little things, but just bear them in mind if you're getting witnesses. We have to go through a process to make sure the translation and all of that is done properly.

Are there any other little things, Clerk, that you see and should tell all of us? It's pretty straightforward.

Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I know that we're going to be busy. This is going to be a busy committee and we want to get to work right away. There are lot of things to talk about and discuss.

We have some notices of motions that we'd like to bring forward to add to the discussions, to work with you guys to help set the agenda in moving forward.

The first one I'm going to read is a notice of motion:

That the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade immediately undertake a pre-study of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP); that this pre-study consist of not more than six meetings to be held between February 8, 2016 and February 26, 2016; that the Committee travel across the country for hearings; and that the Committee report its findings to the House.

I know that the minister has been talking about the number of consultations she's done on it. We think it's important to show that we're actively involved in this file. I know that the agriculture and manufacturing sectors want to see results on this right away. It's the same with the forestry sector. I think it would be wise to really get active on this file immediately and show Canadians that we're hard at work.

• (0930)

The Chair: Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a good suggestion by Mr. Hoback that the TPP should be the first thing on our agenda. I personally agree, but on the other hand, as the honourable member said, the minister has already done enough consultation.

It's not about the minister. It's about the committee, because the committee has its own destiny. We should be the ones deciding how we want to proceed, because certainly members on this committee have their own views and they have the views of their constituents.

It's good to have it as the number one item on the agenda, but fixing that and saying we should get it done...it's a big task, as I've said. The TPP is not a small issue and, on the other hand, our next-door neighbour, the U.S., is going through an election as well. Don't put a timeline on it. Let's decide as we go how long it's going to take. We should study this extensively and bring it forward at a time that is convenient to this committee, not the minister.

The Chair: I don't know how much time we're going to have. I have a suggestion. Maybe we should deal with this motion first, or we can get back to this motion. I'd like to make a suggestion because we have a lot of new members and members who have been here before and are new to the committee. I'd like to get a suggestion, one that comes from the floor, which is that at the first meeting back here we bring the officials in to give us a look at what's out there. What's on the table in Canada and the rest of the world? What's almost finished? What's not finished? What are we looking at?

I'm thinking that might segue into where we want to go. I'm not trying to quash any motions, but I'm just wondering about it. We could spend a lot of time figuring out where we want to go, but unless we really know what previous governments have done or what Canada and the rest of the world are doing, how do we know where we really want to go right away? That's all I'm suggesting.

Do you want to finish the motion first?

Go ahead, Mr. Hoback. It's your motion.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Why don't we stay on the motion? We have a few other motions we want to talk about too.

If you want to do that, Chair, I wouldn't have a problem with that. We could do that next Thursday. Instead of having Tuesday and Thursday meetings during the break week, we could come in for the Thursday and have a meeting in the morning and a meeting in the afternoon. For the meeting in the morning, we could have officials giving us their oversight of what they see as far as the trade file goes, what's going on, and what they're actually pursuing. I think that's fine. Then we could have an afternoon meeting starting off with the TPP. We would be actually starting that work.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Chair, being a new member to the committee, I would like to hear from the officials. I think it's a great suggestion to get a scan of everything that's out there, what's going on, and the scope of what we're going to be working on.

I've booked up my whole constituency week. I'm jam-packed every single day, so I don't see us being able to do this till we return.

The Chair: Ms. Ramsey.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Thank you, Chair.

I have a couple of things. I like the idea of having a briefing. We'd like to see what previous studies have been done and what studies have been done since the minister took on the file. We'd like to have that information. If there was in fact an economic impact study done under the Conservative government previously, all of that information would be very helpful.

To the particular motion that was raised, it's a little unclear to me. For these six meetings, who would they be with? Where would they be? Why the tight time frame? I'd like some more clarification on the six meetings and what they would entail. The tight time frame I think is not reasonable. I feel that we have more time. We have to put thought into what we're doing here. To set a really tight time frame around it limits our ability to do that to our full potential.

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think we just need to take into context what a notice of motion is. It's really that an individual member says, "I have an issue that I'd like the committee's attention on." It doesn't actually have to be voted on and debated that day, interfering with the agenda. I do think we want to support the ability of individual members to come to this committee and say, "I'd like to have this motion." As a notice of motion, I think it's just simply laying on the table that this is an issue.

Some of us are going to be a little more prepared than others because we've served before. Some of us are a little clearer on which issues we'd like to look at, but putting it out there actually does allow both the government members and the opposition members the opportunity to take a look at something and ask how they feel about that. It doesn't interfere with anything on the agenda that's being set up, but what it does allow is that it empowers members to make sure the issues that they feel are important are brought to the attention of the committee.

• (0935)

The Chair: That's a very good analogy, but it's just that this motion has quite an impact on people's lives in the next week and on how this committee is going to run. That's why it has to be dealt with. It's not just a suggestion. It's more than a suggestion. It's really setting the table for us for the next two months.

There's a little difference when you have a motion of intent that we look at something. This motion pretty well puts.... It makes a big difference, right?

Mr. Dan Albas: I don't mean to debate that point, Mr. Chair. What I'm simply saying is that I have something I'd like to put on the table, and I'll let Mr. Hoback talk about the reasons why his course is better. I do think it's important for individual members to know that if they have a concern, they can bring a notice of motion. It doesn't have to be acted upon that day. That's why it's called a notice of motion.

The Chair: Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I appreciate what my colleague from the NDP said. As you get into committee, you'll understand that you'll have your chance to bring in your witnesses and will have the ability to have input on how the meeting goes. We take it for granted because we've been here before, but you'll see it as it unfolds.

I just want to highlight to the government what their own minister is saying in the media today, "I think it's important to start with the committee and continue with a national consultation" on the provisions of TPP. She's actually asking that we do this before you bring any vote into the House. Let's get to work and get this done so that you can bring this into the House as soon as possible under your schedule. That is why the timeline is tight.

Basically, she has looked at this and has said that she signed it yesterday. She's saying that she wants us to do this work, and as opposition members, we're saying that we want to do this work too. We want to see this put forward as soon as possible, so let's get this out of the way.

That's why I think we should get to work next week, actually start our study, and have it completed by the end of February so we can go back to the minister and the House with a report. It will have contents that the NDP will like and not like, contents that government will like and not like, and contents that we will like and not like, but it will be done. Then the minister and the government will have the ability, if they so choose, to bring in legislation in March. Then we've done our work. It's there, done and complete, and she can bring forward that legislation as soon as possible.

We're ready to do that right now. We feel that it's time to go to work. Let's—

The Chair: Mr. Hoback, we are a bit of a steering committee, okay? This is like a steering committee. We're kind of charting our course, right? At a steering committee, we sometimes just sit among ourselves. We used to have one member from each party, and we'd ask how we were going to deal with issues. We are kind of talking like a steering committee now, even though it's a motion.

The thing is, if we were at a steering committee, I'd ask, "Okay, folks around the table, are we going to come here next week or not?" I'd ask for a show of hands and say, okay, we're not, or okay, we are, so now let's move on from that to whether we are going to bring the officials in.... A steering committee would be less formal, and you would do it that way, but we're not technically a steering committee.

You have the right to have this motion, so are we going to deal with your motion? It has been brought here. Does it have to be voted on?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: It has to have unanimous consent, first of all.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I think it's actually a relevant motion for what we're discussing today. It's nothing—

The Chair: In order to move it forward, you need to have unanimous consent.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Wait a minute, not necessarily, because we are discussing scheduling and planning. This is relevant to scheduling and planning, thus it can be heard today and it can be voted on today.

A voice: [*Inaudible—Editor*] 48 hours.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Yes, but you can bring any notice into committee if it's relevant to the committee business at hand. We are talking about scheduling. That is the business at hand right now, so it is relevant.

The Chair: It still is going to need to have unanimous consent.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I disagree. I would ask the clerk to investigate that.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: I just feel, having heard the discussion, that there is a better way forward and that we need to hear from the officials. This is kind of at the last minute. We do have a constituency week coming up in a couple of days. We can all go back to our constituencies and take the opportunity to do our own research, and then come back fresh when we're back in a week and a half from now and get started.

● (0940)

The Chair: My understanding is that if a motion is brought forward there's usually a timeline for the next meeting. If there's unanimous consent amongst the whole group.... If it is very critical to do it now, it can be done now only if everybody agrees. That's what I sense. If everybody doesn't agree on this now, the motion is really irrelevant because our next meeting won't be until....

That's my understanding, but let me speak with the clerk.

Technically we cannot. We just looked into it and it requires a 48-hour notice of motion.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Can I seek unanimous consent this one time to hear the motion? Do I have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: There is no unanimous consent. I hear no.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Okay. The motion is a moot point then, right?

The Chair: For right now it is, yes.

A voice: There is no motion on the spot....

Mr. Randy Hoback: Can we do a vote on unanimous consent or do you just do a voice vote on that?

The Chair: If you hear no, then it's not unanimous. I think when you go unanimous all you have to hear is one no. You don't have to record the vote. That's my guess on it.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Again this is just for notices. It's not for discussion now. It's just to put it on the record:

That the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade undertake a study of the benefits of the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement to Canadian business; that the Committee travel to Ukraine to conduct hearings as part of this study; and that the Committee report its findings to the House.

Again it's just notice. I just wanted to put it on the record for you. There is no urgency or timeline attached to it.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Can you repeat the motion?

Mr. Randy Hoback: It says:

That the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade undertake a study of the benefits of the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement to Canadian business; that the Committee travel to Ukraine to conduct hearings as part of this study; and that the Committee report its findings to the House.

We have an agreement in place there.

● (0945)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Is there no timeline to study this?

Mr. Randy Hoback: No, it's just something we'd like to study.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I have a couple as well that I feel are important. I think the committee might agree too. It's:

That the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade undertake a study of Canada's trade partnership with the United States—

I, along with Tracey, are in the western corridor of Ontario

—to examine, among other topics, the Keystone XL Pipeline project and the Detroit-Windsor bridge project; and that the Committee report its findings to the House.

We will get some briefing on where we're at with some of these things, as suggested, but that's one that's very important to me.

Second, I have chaired the Canada-Turkey friendship association for a number of years, so my second motion is:

That the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade undertake a study of the benefits of a free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Turkey; that as part of this study, the Committee travel to Turkey to conduct hearings; and that the Committee report its findings to the House.

Those are my two notices of motions.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'm actually glad there's a fellow British Columbian MP here, Mr. Dhaliwal, because this is something we've discussed in the House of Commons, softwood lumber. Obviously in my riding—in Merritt, Princeton, and West Kelowna—all the largest private employers are lumber mills. British Columbia Premier Christy Clark made mention to the Prime Minister in their first communication that softwood lumber was the most important issue for British Columbia because we have 55% of the softwood lumber.

The notice of motion I'd like to give today is:

That the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade undertake a study of the Softwood Lumber Agreement between Canada and the United States; and that the Committee report its findings to the House.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, honourable member, for bringing it forward out of British Columbia. In fact, as the Liberal B. C. caucus, we are meeting with the experts on free trade. I agree that we should study that. That should be part of this committee at some point in time.

The Chair: We have some motions, and they're suggestions as to where we should go. I think this is good.

I would like to see a motion come forward dealing with our next meeting. It would be like this, I guess. We would invite the officials. If the officials come, we should ask them, besides their giving us the big picture snapshot, to make sure some of those issues that were brought.... They can also give us a little bit about the Detroit bridge and a little about..., because they might not know that....

Clerk, if we go down this road, we would like them to make sure they have some of those issues also in our big snapshot.

Go ahead, Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: On this, Mr. Chair, I would also add that another part of it should be the European free trade agreement, because some of the members on this committee are new and are not familiar with that particular free trade agreement. It would be good if they could brief us on that as well.

The Chair: We're working towards the first meeting after we come back, which would be a Tuesday. We have a full two hours with officials, I'm guessing.

The other thing I'm suggesting is that, before that meeting, because there's a whole week, the officials get some broad information to some of the MPs during the week, some of the background.

Mr. Randy Hoback: It should go to the clerk and be distributed to the MPs.

The Chair: For instance, I'm trying to be flexible here, but it would be nice for some of the MPs, especially new MPs, by next Thursday, to receive some sort of, just a little bit of—so they can prepare for questions when the time comes.

Is that possible, clerk?

The clerk just brought up something good. Sometimes we deal with officials, but the library is there for us, too. There are two different things. The library could get the stuff to you. Either way, I don't think it matters, as long as you have something in your hand later on in the week. It can help to get our head around where we're going and then you can ask questions.

Can we move along with where we want to go?

I'll go to Mr. Hoback, and then who wants to go next?

• (0950)

Mr. Randy Hoback: I was going to add that there were some studies done on TPP and CETA in the previous government. I think the clerk can distribute those to the committee members. It's some good background information.

I'm not opposed to doing the CETA study. I think CETA is plugging along in the background here as they do the translation in Europe. You may want to look at your timing as to when you want to do that. We'd be okay with that, too.

The Chair: Do we need a motion on what we're going to do the first day back?

Go ahead, Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I bring forward the motion that the first day back here, we should bring the officials from the department so they can brief us on the issues that we've brought forward—TPP, the European free trade, the issue that Mr. Van Kesteren brought forward, and also the softwood lumber deal.

An hon. member: And Ukraine...?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: And Ukraine.

The Chair: And any others, really.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: And any others, yes.

The Chair: [*Inaudible—Editor*] something in China we don't even know about, right?

We need a snapshot, and to make sure those things are included.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Right.

We would also request that the library analysts here bring any information forward and distribute it to the committee members as well.

The Chair: Next week, then, try to get something, just as kind of a background on issues, to the committee members.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Before we get back here so that we can utilize the time....

The Chair: That way we'll have a couple of days to look at it before we come back here on Tuesday.

The clerk has brought it to my attention that in the week of March 21 or 22, there could be an EU delegation coming here. I'm just giving you a heads-up on that. That might be a week that could be chunked up there.

Is it my sense that following our meeting Tuesday we will have to come to some sense of where we're going right away? We should have a sense, but we'll still have to talk amongst ourselves after Tuesday, and say, "Okay; now we've heard it, so...." We really have to know, by that following Thursday, where we're going in the weeks ahead.

Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Yes, Chair, I agree with you. I think we need to do that by Thursday for sure. But I was hoping that maybe even on Tuesday we could slice off 15 or 20 minutes to help lay that down. I think that would be wise. We could entertain motions at that time too.

Perhaps you could get that into the committee agenda for the Tuesday meeting.

The Chair: We'll see how Tuesday goes. If everything goes really good, and everybody's getting her going....

You guys know the way it is around here. We have to be out of here at a certain time: boom. Sometimes there are votes that really mess things up, and then we have to come back and forth. But if everything's going good, I have no problem with that. We have a good sense here.

Mr. Randy Hoback: You might even want to do another meeting of the committee on Wednesday or Thursday just so that next week we have our lineup done and completed and actual studies started. We'd be game for that. We just think it's important that the committee get active. There is lots of work to do.

If you start travelling, your days get sucked away very quickly. If that means you have to spend some extra time getting everything prepared next week, we're here ready to do that. Or if you want to do it the first week we're back, we're also ready to prepare to do that.

The Chair: Yes. I think that week will be a big week.

If I may, members, I'm not trying to prejudge where we're going, but there's no doubt that TPP will be big. We all know that. I'm asking you guys to probably start thinking about witnesses. It's just a good idea. If we're going to hit the ground running, we might need a witness list sooner than later. Sometimes it takes a while to get the witness list. Sometimes you can draw from Ottawa for the first couple of meetings.

I have no doubt that TPP will be dealt with in the next few months. That said, just get ready for that. When you're back in your ridings, think of who you want, from here, or go back to your party people and your own caucuses.

Madam Lapointe.

• (0955)

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: I have something to suggest regarding the agenda.

I heard what you said about the need to start thinking of our witnesses and I agree. If we invite the officials to appear on February 16, I suggest that we meet in camera on Thursday, February 18, to discuss again what we heard during the February 16 meeting. That's my suggestion.

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: I was hoping we'd do that on Tuesday, after the officials.

The Chair: Yes, but if we can; I don't know.

I don't want to be that strict on it. If we're really into something, I don't want us to say that we're going to cut people off 15 minutes before the end of the meeting. If we're really into something and we want them to finish it off, I'd sooner us have another meeting later on, to be flexible. I want to go as quickly on it as you guys do, but I just don't want to have a really good conversation going, with a few more questions, and then we have to cut them off and say, "You know, we just didn't finish it right because there's a lot on the table here."

That's all I—

Mr. Randy Hoback: Again, for assurances, I'd like to see Thursday as a working meeting, where we actually start bringing witnesses in, whatever the study is.

The Chair: We might be able to pull that off. I don't think anybody here is trying to delay anything.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Chair, I concur with you in regard to hearing from the officials, and then digesting everything they have to say and asking if they can also bring forward a list of major stakeholders, for all of us to think about those stakeholders over that next day, before we come back on Thursday and start discussing our way forward.

The Chair: It might be quick. I've seen things done fast. We could have an agreement in the last five minutes of the meeting, when we might say it looks as if we have to do TPP and we could bring in some witnesses on Thursday, just from Ottawa. We're in charge of our own destiny. We're just getting going. We might just say, "Look, we have to get to the TPP. Let's hit the ground running on Thursday. Let's get some witnesses from Ottawa." Then maybe we'd be good to go. I'd just like to keep that flexibility.

Does everybody have a feel for that?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: I just have a question. Will there be a call for witnesses and then a deadline for that call, so that we will be able to get those folks in, even if it is on short notice? Would we receive some type of notice that you're calling for witnesses?

The Chair: We're going to be flexible. Sometimes a committee can hit the ground running fast.

Let's say we all agree when we leave the room on Tuesday that we're going to start with the TPP on Thursday. Of course, that would be difficult. You might have witnesses from the Yukon or British Columbia who want to come in here. They might not go to that first meeting.

We have flexibility. If we do the TPP, there are going to be quite a few meetings.

Sometimes you might put a name forward, and it might not happen at that first meeting. There's all kinds of flexibility. Sometimes, if you're going to go quickly, you have to deal with the ones close to Ottawa and then work the others in. Also, there's dealing with translation and so forth—and travel. Sometimes when you ask somebody to come here, you have to pay their way. There's a whole procedure for that.

Go ahead.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Chair, I was just wondering, looking at what we did historically. We took the breakdown of the Parliament, and that's how we allocated the number of witnesses per party. If you look at the breakdown, 56% of the seats are held by the Liberals, so half or 56% of the witnesses would be Liberal, in theory, 30% would be Conservative, and then 13% would be NDP. Is that the rule you're going to follow, also?

The Chair: That's kind of where I'm going to go, but again, I'll be very flexible. I've been at this a long time. Sometimes the witnesses from the NDP or the Liberals were the same. We're trying to have a mix here. We have to base it on the percentage of Parliament, technically, but....

Mr. Randy Hoback: I guess what I'm saying is that, when you look at those numbers, I don't expect you to do that every meeting. I expect you to do that, maybe, for the report as a whole. There may be times when you just can't get a Conservative witness or a Liberal witness, so you may have two Conservative or two NDP witnesses. It's just the way that works out because of travel and everything else. I want to make sure you have the liberty, the freedom to do that, that you don't feel bound that you have to have....

The Chair: The other thing I find is that it works well if, for instance, one meeting on TPP is all about agriculture. You have everybody talking about agriculture. Or maybe it's all unions. Maybe it's all the manufacturers. Sometimes there are broad strokes.

I find it's better to have clusters, if you can, because then you get the whole feel of it. If they're all farmers, all whomever, I think it's a way to get a good feel for what the stakeholders really believe and want.

Yes, we're going to try. We'll look at them, but I think we're looking at them overall so that everybody can get heard, and we can get a sense, and the percentage is there. As you know, the committee's not about getting the voices of the Liberals or Conservatives; it's getting the voices of Canadians. I know that sounds a little cliché, but it's getting everybody's voice, right?

It will go by that rule a bit, but I'm going to try to get people who are in the same group, and then you can get that questioning in. I'll just use an example. You can have the grain growers of wherever and the farmers' union, and they could be totally different, but it's kind of nice to have them at the table at the same time. I was on the agriculture committee, and I found that sometimes it's good to have those types of groups together and you can flush it out a little more.

Go ahead, then.

• (1000)

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Chair, you're presenting the concept of clusters. Are the witnesses literally in the same room at the same time?

The Chair: Yes. Sometimes you can have two slates of witnesses. You could have two rounds or one round.

I'll use an example. If we were on the agriculture committee, the first round could be all grain growers or something, and then it could be all supply management. I like that, because it gives the flavour of the meeting, and when you're preparing, it's good.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Sure. It definitely puts it in context. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We are talking about giving 15 minutes at the end of the first meeting after we come back, and I don't think that's going to be enough. The way I see it, we don't have a steering committee now, and in the past we had a steering committee where we unofficially sat together as a team from all parties and then we'd decide things, and then we'd bring that forward to the committee. Those 15 minutes, I think, are not enough.

On the other hand, if we bring in the officials, there are a lot of issues on the table, and it will take them some time to brief us. For Tuesday, let's give that meeting totally to the officials. On Thursday, we'll come back in camera and set up this agenda. The way we see it right now, we are just beating around the bush. We're not achieving anything right now. On Thursday, we'll go one item at a time in camera, and then we'll set up....

On this side, I see agreement on the issue that we want to study and also on bringing in witnesses. I have never before seen this many people.... We're all talking about it. This committee is working outside the party lines, which is good for Canadians. A meeting might all be to do with people from the unions that have come forward, and if we say we can only allocate a certain percentage of the time to those witnesses, I don't think it's going to work.

Let me have Tuesday and let me get the briefing from the staff. Then we'll come back on Thursday and set up the first order for the agenda and what we are going to study. The consensus seems to be the TPP, so let me get going on the TPP instead of just going around

all of what we can do. These things can be done outside the meeting time between some of the members.

The Chair: Okay. I guess what we have here is a little disagreement on our first meeting. We have agreement for three-quarters of the meeting, but not in the last part. Are there any more comments on the first meeting?

Mr. Dan Albas: I have two quick comments to make.

I'm going to start first with your comments about witnesses. I'm glad that you're going to show some discretion on witnesses, because you'll find that the Conservatives will always put forward the best witnesses. I'm glad that you'll give some extra consideration to that.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dan Albas: I hope everyone detected a sense of humour with that comment.

Second of all, I totally understand what MP Dhaliwal is saying. However, in the public accounts committee that the opposition chaired, here's what I found helpful. We did not have a subcommittee. What would often happen, be it from the government side, was that we would hear some of the concerns and some of the ideas of the opposition. We'd then go around and talk to someone like Mr. Hoback or MP Ramsey—both seem very approachable—and say, “Hey, this is what we're thinking for that last little bit.”

It's pretty much common sense. You've already said that it sounds like it's going to be the TPP, so why don't we just let that process happen and see where that 15 minutes goes? If there's a consultation privately outside of the meeting, or a discussion with the whole committee present, to decide what should happen on Thursday, if it can be done in five minutes, let's let it be. If we talk out the clock, well, then I guess we'll just be back on Thursday talking more.

That's just an idea.

• (1005)

The Chair: My understanding is that we're going to have the officials here for the full two hours. I'll just go down the list, and if there are no more questions, then we'll break off into future business. If people have questions for the officials right for the full two hours, so be it. Is that the way everybody understands it? Would anyone like to make a motion?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Chair, on Thursday we agreed we are going to study the TPP. I would say that on Tuesday we should bring the officials in to brief us, and on Thursday this committee should start working on TPP.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: I don't understand. You want to bring in witnesses already on Thursday for the TPP? We said that on Tuesday we will bring in the officials. We'll have an opportunity to digest everything that the officials say. We'll talk about all the various stakeholders who are involved and touched by the TPP and then on Thursday we'll map how we're going to move forward. That's how I was thinking.

The Chair: I'm using a hypothetical situation. Let's assume that the officials come in here and they say we have to deal with something right away. I don't know what it is. Or maybe somebody is coming to town and we have to deal with it right away on Thursday. I don't know. I'm saying I don't know if you can have this set in stone here until you hear from the officials. That's my sense of it.

Do you have any comments, Mr. Hoback?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Chair, I like what Mr. Dhaliwal is doing. Because Thursday is so close to Tuesday, even if something urgent came up on Tuesday, you wouldn't have enough time to get the witnesses in for that Thursday. This way you have a week and a half to get witnesses lined up for the first TPP meeting on the Thursday. We have our briefing on the Tuesday.

We can still decide priorities after Thursday's meeting, so the next Tuesday we can sit down and say okay let's take the first half hour, or the last half hour and then look at what other things you want to talk about. If we travel, for example—and I know you talked about going to the U.S.—we may still want to talk about softwood lumber down in the U.S., and we may want to talk about other issues. If we were going to travel down there, TPP would be part of the conversations, and maybe we'd have some other conversations about other things we want to talk about.

But that allows the clerks to at least organize for that Thursday meeting. Then we'll have a very productive Thursday meeting and then, after that meeting on Thursday if there's time or on the Tuesday morning of the following week if there's not, we can coordinate a little bit more. Then if the officials say something is absolutely a must, they will have a week from Tuesday to Tuesday. There's nothing saying we have to have only one study on the go. We can actually have one, two, or maybe three studies on the go.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: I feel there's the potential that it will take more than one meeting for us to be briefed on the TPP. This is a massive agreement of 6,000 pages. I appreciate the spirit of everyone wanting to get down to work and have witnesses, but we could potentially need more information from those who are coming to brief us. If we can determine that at the end of that meeting as opposed to saying we're going to call witnesses on Thursday, I think that would be more prudent.

We have an incredible amount of work to do, and I understand there's some pressure on us, but I'd also like to have the space if we need more information after that first meeting so that we'd be able to get it at that point before we proceed with witnesses.

• (1010)

Mr. Peter Fonseca: I know it was brought up that to get the most out of our witnesses we would want to bring them in from particular sectors or organized labour or businesses or from those who are impacted. If we're going to do that, I think we need to plan that, so to jump right in on Thursday and start calling in whatever witnesses are around town, I don't think would be wise in terms of how we want to plan out our work to do our due diligence on the TPP. Ms. Ramsey is right; we don't know if we want to have the officials in for just a day. We may need them for longer.

The Chair: My sense is that the first day, because some of us are new, we should get them to give us a snapshot of Canada and the

world. That's my take on it. From that, we can pull where we feel there is a sense of urgency, and they'll tell us where the hot spots are.

The parliamentary secretary has asked to make a few comments. Is everybody agreed that he do that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. David Lametti (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.): Thank you for allowing me to speak. I just want to say that if you haven't already done so, you should read the minister's mandate letter, which has been made public. There's a lot on the agenda that's been set out in that letter, and I think it's worthwhile for you to be asking the ministry officials for briefings on all of those things. There's a lot happening in trade, and I think it's worth it for us as a committee to really ask a lot of questions of those officials and to really take those briefings seriously.

Mr. Randy Hoback: We have read the mandate, and everybody can get a copy of the mandate letter, which is nice to see.

I think there's a misunderstanding that we're just going to have one meeting. All I'm saying is that you have your one overall briefing on the Tuesday. It's a full meeting, so give it the full two hours. You may want to do another one. Again, it doesn't prevent you from having other briefings. In fact, you can have briefings in the evening from the department. The parliamentary secretary can put on briefings, if he so chooses. That option is there.

All I'm saying is that one of the first of maybe many meetings on the TPP... You may find that there are six meetings and then say that we need nine meetings. I'm not necessarily putting an end to that. I'm just saying let's get started.

The clerks can coordinate things. They have two weeks to get witnesses here basically, so they can coordinate the witnesses for that first meeting. The witnesses could be people from Ottawa, from the department, who are going to brief us specifically on the TPP. That's fair. At least we can go back to our constituents and say we've started the study and we're moving forward.

It doesn't preclude us from doing other things, so don't think that this is just the one meeting. All I'm trying to do is help him coordinate the clerks so they have work to do during the break week to get that lined up. You can get your witness lists in to him too.

It sounds like we're going to do the study on the TPP. I think everybody is in agreement on that, so that's one thing we have consent on. Let's move forward, just make the start and see where it goes from there.

The Chair: Do you have some final comments, Mr. Dhaliwal?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As Mr. Hoback said, on the Thursday witnesses don't necessarily have to be out of town; they can be officials. However, it was a good point that MP Ramsey brought forward that we might need.... As the parliamentary secretary said, if we look at the mandate letter of the minister, there are hundreds of things that we can do. There's a full agenda there.

On Thursday, it's a better suggestion that we bring in the witnesses from the department. They can update us so that members who don't have access to all of that information will have it, and then that's part of the study and we've already started it. We're going around and around, so let me—

The Chair: Am I clear that what you're thinking is that Tuesday we're talking about all agreements of the whole world. But Thursday, we go right into TPP with officials—just on TPP.

Is that what I understand?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: That's what it is.

The Chair: I think we have a bit of agreement here.

• (1015)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: The agreement is this, if I can say it now. On Tuesday, they come in and tell us about everything but the TPP. On Thursday—because there's agreement in this room that we are going to study the TPP as the first order of business in this committee—we bring in the officials just to talk about the TPP. The TPP is not a 15-minute talk. They will go through the whole meeting to brief us on the TPP.

It's very fair to the NDP and to members here.

Is that agreed? Okay, the two meetings are done.

The Chair: Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: The other thing that I would add—some of us have been here for a little longer and some of us are new—is that the clerks do a marvellous job. Once we give them our suggestions for witnesses, they have a way of bringing that about, so there's continuity there.

It makes sense. I think that this is a good approach, and I think we'll all be very pleased. I think it's a very good suggestion that we first of all are properly briefed by the officials and then go on to the witnesses. It will all make sense.

The Chair: Is there any other business today?

There's a suggestion from the clerk. We have the analysts here. They're a part of our team.

Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I just have a question.

Do you want us to submit a few witnesses?

The Chair: I think that any time you want to get your witnesses in for TPP, start getting them in, because this is moving progress.

Welcome aboard. Will you introduce yourselves, please?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Gauthier (Committee Researcher): Good morning. I am Alexandre Gauthier.

[*English*]

I've been assigned to this committee for the last six years. Before that I worked for the government on trade files. Before that, I studied international relations and international management in Montreal and in the U.S.

Mr. Simon Richards (Committee Researcher): My name is Simon Richards. It's my first time working for a parliamentary committee.

A voice: Mine too.

Mr. Simon Richards: Excellent.

Prior to arriving at the Library of Parliament, I worked at the Bank of Canada as an economist. I look forward to working with you all.

The Chair: Welcome aboard.

This wraps up the meeting. I think we had a wonderful first meeting. Everybody seemed to get used to everybody's body language and to know where they stood. We had no major disagreements, so hopefully, we can continue in this spirit.

We're going to have a big meeting on Tuesday.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: I bring the motion to adjourn the meeting, please.

The Chair: If you get your witness lists, start bringing them on.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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