



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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Standing Committee on Natural Resources

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Wednesday, February 17, 2016

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• (1535)

[English]

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

[Translation]

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.

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.

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. Lemieux, you may go ahead.

Mr. Denis Lemieux (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): I nominate my colleague James Maloney as chair of the committee.

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

Are there any further motions?

[English]

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

(Motion agreed to)

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: Congratulations, Mr. Maloney.

I invite you to come sit at the front with me.

The Chair (Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.)): First, let me say thank you very much. I appreciate the unanimous support. I will do my very best to make sure this committee runs efficiently, smoothly, and in the spirit of co-operation we all want.

If the committee is in agreement, I invite the clerk to proceed with the election of the vice-chairs.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Clerk: Thank you.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2) the first vice-chair shall be a member of the official opposition. I am now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): I'd like to nominate John Barlow as the vice-chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. Stubbs that Mr. Barlow be elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Seeing none, is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Thank you.

Congratulations, Mr. Barlow, on being elected as first vice-chair.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): I nominate Richard Cannings, please.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Marc Serré that Mr. Richard Cannings be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Congratulations, Mr. Cannings, on being elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: If the committee so wishes, we can deal with procedural motions today. There are a number of them. I'm going to distribute a document to make sure everybody is working from the same page.

The first procedural motion deals with analyst services:

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.

Mr. Harvey is prepared to move the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Item number two pertains to the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be composed of five (5) members, including the Chair, the two (2) Vice-Chairs and two (2) Government Members and that the quorum of the Subcommittee shall consist of at least three (3) members, including one (1) member of the opposition.

Do I have a mover? Mr. Harvey.

Is there any discussion?

Ms. Bergen.

• (1540)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): I noticed that there's a Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure and I would have the same comments for a subcommittee on private members' business.

I've chaired and vice-chaired committees in previous Parliaments, and in some committees we forwent this subcommittee. We always met as a whole to discuss private members' business as well as the agenda. In fact, it was called the steering committee. We didn't have a steering committee. Instead, we met as a whole.

I'm wondering if the committee would consider that. I know my colleague Mr. Barlow is the vice-chair. I'm the critic for natural resources, so I would like to be part of those discussions, or my deputy critic be part of them. I'm wondering if you would consider meeting as a whole committee, rather than having a subcommittee.

The Chair: This committee would do what the subcommittee would have done.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Generally, we'd talk about all of these issues as well.

The Chair: Does anybody else have any comments they'd like to make?

Mr. Barlow.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): I've had some experience with committees in the past. The other thing with steering committees or subcommittees is that they meet in camera, and I think it's important that we be as open to the public as possible. I think the discussions we have, whether they're on private members' business or with procedures, should be in the open, in the public view.

Any time we can avoid being in camera, I think we should do so.

The Chair: Your addendum to Ms. Bergen's proposal is that there be no subcommittee, that the committee as a whole conduct the business of the subcommittee, and that we do so in open session.

Are there any comments?

Mr. McLeod.

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, the subcommittee structure is intended to provide a committee that is smaller than all of us here, not requiring all of us together to deal with specific issues. I don't know why I would want to be required to sit in on every issue that we have to deal with. I'd prefer a subcommittee structure. That would be the way I'd like to see things go.

The Chair: Ms. Bergen.

Hon. Candice Bergen: I think we have to have quorum. That member could always get a substitute. It doesn't mean we will literally, each of us, be at every single meeting. I think there might be times, if you can't make it to a meeting, that you can get a substitute to come in. But it would give us the opportunity and then, if we wanted to be here, we could be here. It gives us flexibility. But you wouldn't have to be here, Mr. McLeod.

• (1545)

The Chair: There are a lot of new people on this committee, including yours truly. How often would a subcommittee typically meet?

Hon. Candice Bergen: It's really up to the committee. Some steering committees virtually never meet, and then some steering committees make every decision by steering committee. It would depend on what we decided as a committee.

The Chair: This committee is designated to sit on Mondays and Wednesdays, so I was assuming the subcommittee would sit at some other time. Are you proposing to add a third committee day?

Ms. Candice Bergen: No.

The Chair: When do you propose this would happen, then? Would it be during one of those two meetings?

Hon. Candice Bergen: I could be wrong, but I don't think anyone on a potential steering committee has any extra time for an additional meeting. I think you would want to have it during your meeting time.

Typically, what we did when I was a chair was have our two scheduled meetings, and maybe once every sixth or seventh meeting or whenever, we would have a steering committee meeting. This would mean that nobody else came; it would be just the steering committee members who would be at that particular meeting and make decisions.

It's not an extra meeting.

The Chair: Mr. Harvey.

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): What I would like to add from my standpoint is that I'm a proponent of a subcommittee, but I'm not a proponent of a subcommittee that makes all the decisions on behalf of the committee.

In another committee I'm sitting on, we have a subcommittee that is going to arrange the issues and the proposed witnesses and then bring the matters back to the committee as a whole to discuss them. All it's really doing is saving some people some time. Basically, it's taking it out of the normal committee sessions. It's basically going to do it in a different environment. It's not really making any decisions on behalf of people who aren't there; they're bringing everything back to the committee as a whole.

I'm a proponent of that.

The Chair: Okay, so you're in favour of the subcommittee.

Does anybody else wish to add to the discussion?

How do we propose to put this to a vote, then? There are really two parts to your... The subcommittee, as I understand it, would meet in camera, as you're proposing it.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Chair, my proposal is that we not have subcommittees or steering committees. Any decisions that we make will be in the open as a group.

I think it's just one motion. I'll put a motion forward that we not have subcommittees.

The Chair: Okay.

As Mr. Harvey just pointed out, any decision by the subcommittee would have to be ratified by the committee as a whole, in any event. Is that correct?

To clarify this for voting, Mr. Harvey has moved that the subcommittee be created, using the wording that was read into the record. I think we have to vote on that, and then, depending on the outcome, we can move on to any subsequent motions.

I'll read it again:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be composed of five (5) members, including the Chair, the two (2) Vice-Chairs and two (2) Government Members and that the quorum of the Subcommittee shall consist of at least three (3) members, including one (1) member of the opposition.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Before moving on to the next item, I should invite the analyst to come and join us at the table.

Welcome.

Motion number three is on meeting without a quorum:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings and to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present, provided that at least three (3) members are present, including one (1) member of the opposition and one (1) member of the government.

The motion is moved by Mr. Serré.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Item number four concerns time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses.

Is there a question?

• (1550)

Mr. Michael McLeod: Mr. Chair, I'd like to move that witnesses be given up to 10 minutes for their opening statement, at the discretion of the chair; that round one consist of: first, Conservative for six minutes; second, Liberals for six minutes; third, NDP for six minutes; and fourth Liberals for six minutes; and that round two consist of: first, Liberals for six minutes; second, Conservatives for six minutes; third, Liberals for six minutes; fourth, Conservatives for five minutes; and fifth of NDP for three minutes, for a total of 50 minutes, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Is there any discussion on this motion?

Mr. Barlow.

Mr. John Barlow: I don't support the rotation that the member put forward. I think, again from experience, that when you have those six minutes all the way through, it doesn't give a lot of time for every member to have an opportunity to ask questions. As you will start to see during testimony, many of you will not have an opportunity to ask questions if you stick with that six minutes all the

way through. I think it's much more beneficial to each of us in the room if you have sevens, fives, and threes. It gives everybody a chance to ensure that you have an opportunity to ask your questions.

As to the order, I think the government party should have the opportunity to ask their question first. I would prefer option two—the PROC option—rather than option one.

The Chair: Is there any other discussion?

Hon. Candice Bergen: I would just speak very frankly.

In this case, as John said, I think the government members are going to find that these committee meetings can be long and that they're going to be spending a lot of time here. The one chance you get to actually make an impact and say something that will be listened to by your riding is when you ask questions.

When we were in government, which feels like a very long time ago now, we went with the PROC option. It was a bit of a compromise, but we did it for the sake of the opposition members, so that every single member on committee would be able to do their job, say something, maybe mention their riding. It worked out very well. Actually, there were a number of times when for us as the government it didn't work out.... Well, it worked out better, but still there were times when it wasn't the best thing.

I would ask you to at least consider it, so that you would know that you'd each have a chance to speak and that all of us on this committee would have a chance to speak. I know you're probably being directed differently; I know what it's like to be there. But if you are allowed a free vote on this, I would ask that you at least consider this different rotation. Once this is set in stone, gentlemen, it is done. We cannot reverse it. So I would ask that you consider supporting the normal order whereby the government starts and then we all get a chance to speak.

Thank you.

The Chair: I've just been advised that we actually can change that at any time, so it's not set in stone.

Hon. Candice Bergen: I could be wrong, but if they're going to be whipped on this one, I doubt anyone's going to let them change it at another time. That's all I'm saying.

The Chair: I just thought that if one of us is wrong, it's important that we clarify that before we make a decision. That's all.

Mr. Harvey.

Mr. T.J. Harvey: As a point of clarification, is the proposal from Mr. Barlow to adopt the PROC format? Do you want to amend the original motion to adopt PROC?

Some hon. members: Yes.

Mr. T.J. Harvey: Okay.

•(1555)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Chair, as a point of clarification for my colleague's proposal, you're correct. We would like to propose an amendment to the speaking order so that it would reflect what I understand is a rotation that's been adopted by committees recently. That would be, in the first round, seven minutes for each, and that order would go Liberal, Conservative, NDP, and then Liberal. In the second round it would go Conservative for five minutes, Liberal for five minutes, Conservative for five minutes, Liberal for five minutes, and NDP for three minutes.

The Chair: You want to change the order and the time.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: We would want to propose an amendment to reflect that.

The Chair: Mr. McLeod.

Mr. Michael McLeod: Mr. Chairman, I think that if you add up the PROC's recommendation, there is an extra minute in it. I take it, then, that the Conservatives are giving up one of their minutes to hit the 50-minute mark, because that doesn't add up to 50 minutes. It adds up to 51 minutes, so somebody would have—

The Chair: We're checking the math on that.

You're right, it's 51.

Mr. Harvey.

Mr. T.J. Harvey: If my math serves me correctly, and math was one of the subjects that I was actually decent at, and it seems like pretty simple math, it adds up to 51 minutes, which is seven, seven, seven, seven, five, five, five, five, and three, for a total of 51 minutes.

Is that the amendment that you wish to bring forth?

The Chair: It's PROC's, right?

It's also an amendment to change the order, plus the times of the order.

Mr. T.J. Harvey: It's the adoption of the PROC model, which was agreed upon by all three parties previously.

A voice: Yes.

Mr. T.J. Harvey: I have no issue with that. I'm just speaking to the amendment to the motion.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I also have no issue with the PROC model to provide the split here and then changing the first to the second. I think that would be a good thing.

The Chair: Okay, so could somebody, just so we're crystal clear here, go through this document in the way you're proposing it to be amended?

Mr. John Barlow: I'm suggesting that the time for opening remarks remain at 10 minutes for the opening statement from our witnesses.

What I am suggesting is that we accept the PROC system in terms of our questioning and the time and the order as part of that. That would be: seven minutes, five, five, five, five, three, and then the Liberals, Conservatives, NDP, and then Liberal, Conservative.

An hon. member: Is that not what you handed out?

Mr. John Barlow: See, I have a different sheet here. There are two different sheets going around here.

An hon. member: I wonder if that's the problem.

The Clerk: I understand that there are three different documents going around.

There's one document entitled, "Routine motions adopted by the Committee during the second session of the 41st Parliament". That's what was inserted in your briefing book that was sent 10 days ago. There's another document on the RNNR routine motions adopted by the committee in the previous session. Some people are referring to the motions adopted by PROC in December, and that's something else.

Mr. John Barlow: Let me put this forward, then.

Regarding the sheet with the title "Routine Motions Adopted During the First Session of the 42nd Parliament", I am suggesting that we keep that as that is the PROC system and that's what's been used for most of the committees in the past. All I'm saying is that we keep that system and not change to another one.

On this sheet here, this is the one we've used in the past and I'm suggesting that we continue to use that system.

The Chair: That's the one with Liberals, seven minutes, Conservatives, seven minutes, NDP, seven minutes, Liberals, seven minutes, right? Round two is Conservatives, five minutes, Liberals, five minutes, Conservatives, five minutes, Liberals, five minutes, NDP, three minutes.

Does everybody understand the amendment? Can we have a vote, then, on the motion as amended to adopt the PROC procedure, which I just read into the record?

Mr. McLeod.

•(1600)

Mr. Michael McLeod: Mr. Chairman, it's the same question. Are we planning to go over the hour, then? This is an hour and a minute. We're going 51 minutes plus 10 minutes for the witness. Is that what we're agreeing to? Is that the motion?

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Chair, to Mr. McLeod, this is in the best-case scenario, but rarely will this ever happen, if ever. You're going to have more than one witness per meeting. You will never have an hour with each one, or very rarely.

That's why I really want to stick with this PROC system, so every member, or close to every member, has an opportunity to ask a question. A lot of these bottom ones will not happen. That's why I think it's important we go with the PROC system, so all of us in this room have an opportunity to ask a question. I think that's vitally important.

The Chair: Does that answer your question?

Mr. John Barlow: To help Mr. McLeod, if anything, the opposition will be losing its time slots more often than not because we're the bottom two.

Mr. Michael McLeod: If we're all okay with going an hour and a minute, because that's what it adds up to, regardless if we use it or not, it's still going to add up to that. That's the time we have to allow. If everyone of us hits the max, that's what we're going to do, an hour and a minute: 51 minutes for the parties, 10 minutes for the witness.

The Chair: Does anybody not understand that's the consequence, that we're adding a minute to this?

Hon. Candice Bergen: No, you're going to cut off the meeting.

The Chair: As long as everybody's good with the extra one minute, we can vote on this now.

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

The Chair: Item number five is on document distribution:

That only the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to distribute documents to the members of the Committee and only when the documents are available in both official languages; and that witnesses be advised accordingly.

Mr. Lemieux is moving that motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next item is a very important one, on working meals. We might want to talk about this one:

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

It's moved by Mr. Lemieux.

Mr. McLeod, do you have a question?

Mr. Michael McLeod: Yes, does that include subcommittees?

The Chair: Excellent question. I guess we can decide that. As the motion reads, it does not include subcommittees.

Mr. Michael McLeod: Whose motion is it? The PROC's motion does include it. The one you just read does not include it.

The Chair: This question has never been asked before. It's not a problem. If the subcommittee meets and members are hungry, we can make arrangements.

Mr. Michael McLeod: Can we add that to the motion, then?

The Chair: Working meals for the committee and the subcommittee.

Mr. Michael McLeod: If I'm going to sit on a subcommittee, I want to eat.

The Chair: Okay.

Is there any other discussion on the main motion or the amendment? No? All in favour of the motion as amended?

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

The Chair: The next item is on travel, accommodation and living expenses of witnesses:

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

Mr. Serré is moving that.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is on staff at in camera meetings:

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.

Ms. Bergen is the mover for that motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Moving right along to the next item, In camera meetings transcripts, which reads:

That one (1) copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the Committee Clerk's office for consultation by members of the Committee.

Mr. Tan is moving the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The last motion, appropriately enough, is on notice of motions:

That forty-eight (48) hours' notice be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the Committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration; that the notice of motion be filed with the Clerk of the Committee and distributed to members in both official languages; and that completed motions received before the close of business, which is understood to be 4:00 p.m., be distributed the same day.

Mr. Cannings is moving that motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: There are no more procedural motions that I'm aware of.

Is there any other business which people would like to discuss today?

Ms. Bergen.

• (1605)

Hon. Candice Bergen: Thank you.

I don't know if you want to have a minute of discussion, because obviously this isn't at all an official motion, but I wanted to ask about this so that we could get a good start on the committee and have some good discussion. I'm sure the government has things that they want to discuss and study, and there are probably some things that we would want to too, where we have commonalities.

I wondered if it would be good to bring the minister in right away so that we could see in what direction the government would like to go. We could talk about some of the pressing issues that are happening right now. Again, this is not a formal motion. As opposed to an actual motion, I just wanted to throw it out there and see if we could just invite him to come when he has time, obviously. If he could come even for just an hour, for the first hour while we get started, we could go from there to start to build our agenda. I just thought I'd ask.

The Chair: Mr. Harvey.

Mr. T.J. Harvey: While we were here I scribbled out an impromptu motion to that effect, I guess, but I don't know if it needs to be a formal motion or just a request at this point. If it does need to be a motion, then I have a motion that could be amended to fit that. I'm just asking.

Hon. Candice Bergen: If you want to present a motion, we'd absolutely be willing to waive that 48-hour clause, if the NDP member would be all right with that. Then we could actually formalize it.

Mr. T.J. Harvey: The reason I wrote it is that, seeing as how we do not have a subcommittee on procedure in place yet—we have a partial subcommittee in place, of course, but not one fully in place—I thought it would give us an opportunity to get a head start. It's really the point from where we should start our work anyway.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Even though we have a subcommittee, it doesn't preclude any of us from bringing forward motions or suggesting business as well.

Mr. T.J. Harvey: Right. Absolutely not.

The Chair: Do we need to call for a motion? Can we not just leave it that we're going to invite the minister to attend at his earliest convenience?

Mr. T.J. Harvey: I'll just read what I have and you guys can determine whether or not you really need to do it. The motion, as written, is fairly loose. The motion would read: "That we, as a committee, ask the Minister of Natural Resources to present himself to committee at his first opportunity to discuss his mandate letter and additionally, to make himself available to appear before committee when requested in the future."

The Chair: Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, do we need to have a motion? We have everything in place right now. Obviously, the invitation will be sent to the minister. The scheduling and the waiving of the 48 hours, whether that comes into play.... I don't think it's necessary to have it. The parliamentary secretary will put the invitation in, and I'm sure the minister will try to accommodate us, depending upon the various witnesses we have or the topics of the day. I don't think we need a motion. An invitation to the minister would be more than welcomed by him, I'm sure.

• (1610)

The Chair: Mr. Lemieux, do you have a comment?

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Lemieux: Do you think it has to be the minister, or could it be one of his officials?

That may make it possible for the committee to schedule a meeting sooner. We could get down to committee business more quickly and efficiently.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. McLeod, and then Ms. Bergen.

Mr. Michael McLeod: Mr. Chair, I was hoping we would take a bit of time to build some type of foundation for this committee's responsibilities. There are a number of sectors that I'd be keen on becoming more familiar with. I am hesitant to bring in the minister without knowing more about the different sectors, what the issues are, some of the history. I think we're getting a bit excited about passing a motion to get the minister in here and run on the minister's agenda. I'd like to have the committee get on a better footing—at least I would like to be on a better footing. I think there is a need to have the minister come before us, but to make that the first thing on the agenda, I don't know if that's the way to go.

The Chair: Ms. Bergen and then Mr. Harvey.

Hon. Candice Bergen: This would be our foundation for going forward. The minister, of all people, knows the mandate and knows the sectors, and it is incumbent on all of us to prepare ourselves, to read and to do our research. We were just going to suggest it, but we would be happy with the motion. Either way, we need to immediately, initially, bring in the minister. I don't think he would mind. He's very open and has been talking about his file a lot. He has done a very good job working on his file, so I don't think it would be a problem for him, and he would probably appreciate meeting us and knowing that we really want to know his thoughts on a whole bunch of these different sectors.

My request stands, and whether it's just an informal request or an actual motion—

The Chair: The motion has been made.

Hon. Candice Bergen: It was made, so we do have a motion.

The Chair: I'm sorry. Mr. Cannings had his hand up and I didn't see him before.

Mr. Cannings.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): I heard the part of the motion that said the minister would be appearing in the future. I just want to make sure that this doesn't preclude us from asking the minister to come to talk about estimates later, after the initial meeting.

The Chair: Mr. Harvey.

Mr. T.J. Harvey: Everybody wants to proceed with this. I would like to clarify that the spirit of the motion was just an informal invitation for the minister to discuss his mandate letter, which is public. I also believe the minister would want to speak with the committee, but it's up to the committee.

The Chair: I agree with that, and I think the spirit of your motion and the suggestion are identical. Since notice of this meeting was only to deal with procedural issues, and notice wasn't given to talk about future items for discussion, including this, maybe we'll just leave that as a suggestion and deal with it in the course of setting our agenda for future meetings, if everybody's content with that.

Mr. John Barlow: It is a motion on the floor. I have no qualms supporting it. I think we should vote on it. I think the group here is willing to do that. I'm ready to vote on it. I think it's something we all agree we should do anyway.

• (1615)

The Chair: Mr. Lemieux.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Lemieux: Actually, Mr. Chair, I'm picking up on the point I raised earlier.

Might we consider inviting either the minister or one of his officials to appear?

[English]

The Chair: If you want to suggest that amendment, we can do that.

Mr. Harvey.

Mr. T.J. Harvey: I feel that it's very important for any committee to start off on the right foot and to start off as a unified body. We're here to do a job, and it's very important that it be perceived that we are jelling and working together collaboratively as a team. If we don't feel there's a consensus that we want to go forward with this today, then I'll retract it and bring it forth another time.

The Chair: That's up to you, because it's your motion.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, as I said earlier with regard to an informal invitation or whether we are to proceed with the motion, maybe as my colleague Mr. Lemieux mentioned earlier, we could just, without tying ourselves too tightly, say "the minister or a representative". Otherwise we have to work around the minister's schedule. So either we can just leave it as an informal invitation, or if there is going to be a formal motion, let's not tie it in too much and leave it open to being a representative of the department.

The Chair: Ms. Bergen.

Hon. Candice Bergen: I think there are going to be all kinds of opportunities when we will have a formal motion, and we'll probably then say "the minister and/or his representatives", but for me, this request was, in the spirit of what Mr. Harvey said, to have the minister here to talk about his mandate letter. However we want to proceed, it's just an informal agreement to ask the minister. It's not a formal request, so that doesn't tie him in. Because it's not a motion, it would make it a little less of an issue if he has less time in the near future.

The Chair: Mr. Harvey.

Mr. T.J. Harvey: In the spirit of collaboration, I'll agree to withdraw the motion and then we can proceed.

The Chair: Thank you.

So you will withdraw the motion. I was going to suggest that I could extend an invitation to the minister to say that he is welcome at all times and that we would love to meet with him any time in the future. How's that? Okay.

You had your hand up.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: I was just going to concur and suggest that maybe at your earliest opportunity you could send a letter and

invite the minister to appear before our committee at his earliest convenience.

The Chair: Consider it done.

See what collaboration can do? We get to positive results. Is there any other business today?

Mr. McLeod.

Mr. Michael McLeod: Just going back to what I was mentioning earlier, are we going to talk about how we want to move forward or are we saying just invite the minister and that's it?

I was hoping we'd be able to discuss who we want to invite, who we want to hear from, and what types of industry we need to focus on. I thought we'd have all those things on the table at one time, including the minister's visit. But if we're going to just zoom in on the minister, it doesn't allow for that kind of discussion.

The Chair: I think everybody is in agreement with that. Perhaps for the next meeting, the agenda could consist of talking about future agenda items and the issues we want to look at and potential witnesses and people to invite to committee, including the minister.

Okay? Excellent.

All right, is there any other business?

Mr. Cannings.

Mr. Richard Cannings: This probably isn't a good place right now for a formal motion on this, but I wanted to say I'm going to leave a motion with the clerk that we discuss conducting a study at the earliest possible time on the softwood lumber issue and negotiations around that.

I think it's a very important issue, and I'd like to mention that I'm bringing that forward.

The Chair: Okay, leave that with the clerk, and we can do it at the next meeting as well. Thank you.

Okay, I'll try it again, is there any other business? None, all right. Do we need a motion to adjourn? No.

The meeting is adjourned.

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