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Thursday, February 4, 2016

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Chair

Mr. Robert Oliphant

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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•(1105)

[Translation]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Jean-Marie David): 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]

Therefore, we can 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 am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. Mendicino.

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Clerk, I would like to nominate Robert Oliphant to be chair of this committee.

The Clerk: Mr. Mendicino has moved that Mr. Oliphant be elected chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare Mr. Oliphant duly elected chair of the committee and I invite him to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.)): Just before we proceed to the election of the vice-chairs and then our routine motions, I would like to thank you for choosing me to be your chair. I have sat on this committee before, two parliaments ago, and it's incredibly important and interesting work. I also want to say that we are committed, on the government side, to ensuring that the committees run as bodies that are listening to all parliamentarians equally. My task, as the chairperson, will be to be your chairperson. Very clearly, I'm not here as the government chairperson, I'm here as the committee chairperson. I will endeavour to make sure that our procedures, our discussions, our debates, and our reports are fully encompassing of all the opinions and views of all the members. Obviously, we will get to situations in which we're having votes. I will ensure that the votes are fair and done well. I'm looking forward

to a committee that seeks to make sure that Canada and Canadians are safe and that the rights of Canadians are protected while we're making our country safe. That will be our goal as a committee.

We'll go to the election of the vice-chair. I understand that there are to be two vice-chairs, one from the Conservative Party of Canada and one from the New Democratic Party.

Do I have nominations for vice-chair?

Mr. O'Toole.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): On behalf of the official opposition of Canada, I congratulate you on your election to chair, your return to Parliament, and your continued interest in this important file for Canadians.

On behalf of the Conservative Party, the official opposition, it's my pleasure to nominate MP Larry Miller to be vice-chair of this committee. Mr. Miller is unable to be here today, so he's being nominated in absentia. He certainly has our support.

The Chair: Are there any other nominations?

Mr. Larry Miller has been nominated to be the first vice-chair. All agreed?

We will send our congratulations.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Just for my clarification, who are the members of the committee?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Sopuck is substituting for Mr. Miller in his absence.

The Chair: Okay.

Are there nominations for the second vice-chair?

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Congratulations, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I have many great, esteemed NDP colleagues, but since they've decided to leave me here alone today, I will nominate myself.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I believe that there will be no other nominations then, if I am correct.

[Translation]

Thank you and congratulations to you, as well, Mr. Dubé.

[English]

Now we move to routine motions. You'll have routine motions presented that have been prepared for us by the clerk. We are going to walk through each of them and deal with them as we go.

I think it would be appropriate to have a mover for each of the motions, and we will entertain any discussion or debate and any amendments.

The first one is with respect to services of analysts from the Library of Parliament.

It is moved by Mr. O'Toole:

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Would the analysts like to join us at the table, now that you've been invited?

For those new members of Parliament—and it may be your first committee meeting—you will recognize that the analysts and the clerk make our lives livable. Thank you for your work already, and we look forward to this work over the next many months. It's great to see you again.

Next is a motion on the subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

• (1110)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): I move:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of the Chair, the two Vice-Chairs and two Government Members.

The Chair: That is somewhat different from the prepared motion. You will notice that instead of “a member from the government and the Parliamentary Secretary”, in the motion we have “two government members of the committee”, recognizing a change in direction.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We have a motion around quorum.

Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Do you want me to read the motion?

The Chair: Yes, you should go through it for the minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I move:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings and to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four (4) members are present, including one member from the opposition and one member of the government.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): On distribution of documents I move:

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

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I have a question on this one because I noticed that, returning to Parliament, we were issued new iPads. Are all documents going to be distributed through that device? If so it should probably be reflected in this motion.

The Clerk: As much as possible, when documents are given to me in advance, they'll be available on your iPad, but since they need to be scanned, if witnesses show up with paper, we'll just make copies and distribute those to the members. Then after the meeting they'll be transferred to the iPad.

The Chair: Would you understand “distribute” to include electronically or paper?

The Clerk: Yes.

The Chair: All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Regarding our working meals, go ahead Mr. Mendicino.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: I'm happy to take care of this important piece of business.

That the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the Committee and its Subcommittees.

The Chair: All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Is there any discussion on dietary restrictions? I'm just kidding.

On witnesses' expenses, could I have a motion, Mr. O'Toole?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, 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.

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: With respect to staff at in camera meetings, could I have a motion, Mr. Erskine-Smith?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: That each committee member in attendance be permitted to have one staff member present at any in camera meeting and, in addition, each party shall be permitted to have one staff member from a House officer attend in camera meetings.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1115)

The Chair: Could we have a motion on in camera meeting transcripts?

Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: That in camera meetings be transcribed and that the transcription be kept by the Clerk of the Committee for later consultation by members of the Committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Could we have a motion on notice of motions?

Mr. Di Iorio.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): 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 motions received by 4 p.m. be distributed to members that same day.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is questioning of witnesses.

Mr. Mendicino.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: That at the discretion of the Chair, the witnesses from any one organization be allowed ten (10) minutes to make their opening statement.

We propose that there would be two rounds. Under round one, members of the Conservative Party would be allotted six minutes, then the government side six minutes, members of the NDP six minutes, and then the government side six minutes.

Then in the second round, first up would be members of the government side for six minutes, the Conservative Party for six minutes, back to the government side for six minutes, back to the Conservative Party for five minutes, and finally to the members of the NDP wishing to ask questions for three minutes.

The Chair: Mr. O'Toole.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The official opposition would propose a slightly different scenario that would see an equal distribution but a more substantial first round, which was the tradition of the committees I sat on in the last Parliament. They used this approach of the first round being more substantive and the second round being shorter but with equal balance.

Our proposal would be to have the first round consisting of seven minutes for each party. We would permit the government side to lead off, followed by the Conservatives, the NDP, and then the government again, each having seven minutes, for round one.

Round two would then consist of the official opposition members leading off. To balance the time, they would have five minutes, followed by the Liberals for five minutes, followed by the Conservatives for five minutes, followed by the Liberals for five minutes and the NDP for three minutes.

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, all sides of the procedure and house affairs committee agreed to this proposal, and it worked quite effectively. I'm not sure if it was the same approach in the parliaments you served in, but it makes the first round the longer round.

The Chair: Monsieur Dubé.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: I don't have the document with me. Could Mr. O'Toole just go over the speaking times in the second round again?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Here is the breakdown of speaking times in the second round: five for the Conservatives, five for the Liberals, five for the Conservatives, five for the Liberals and three for the New Democrats.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Erskine-Smith.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. O'Toole mentioned that traditionally the first round was more substantive, with seven minutes allotted per speaker.

Is there a reasoning behind that? I'm new to this.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: I recognize that, and I appreciate the question.

From my experience in the last Parliament, typically there would be two or three witnesses appearing. The presentations would be given. In the first round, at least in the committees I sat on, the seven-minute lead by both the government and the opposition would be the most substantial round. In the last Parliament, the parliamentary secretary would lead off.

I see we have him observing here today. That's an evolution, and that's fine.

The lead questioner for the government side starts off the lead round with seven minutes, followed by the other parties on an equal basis. For the second round, the opposition leads. Usually another witness is questioned in the second round. Sometimes all the witnesses are in favour of a certain proposal; sometimes there's a mixture of support and dissent. The first round allows for a little bit more time. The second round is usually split amongst the other witnesses appearing.

That's how it generally worked.

● (1120)

The Chair: If I may, sometimes you'll have a panel with two 10-minute presentations. That makes 20 minutes of presentation. Think about a two-hour meeting, and 20 minutes; you have about 100 minutes. That means you could get through four rounds, or almost four.

Sometimes you have a panel and then you do a round, because you've divided your meeting into an hour and then a second hour. It means you really do the first round twice on the same day.

Sometimes, just because of the nature of the meeting, you may go through the first round, get partway through the second round, and reach your time limit, because you have another witness going on. Sometimes you continue at the second round, then back up to the first round, just to make sure. Very frankly, that's often at the discretion of the chair.

Sometimes I have found, in the special committee I'm doing, that the NDP gets squeezed at the last, every time, in the second round. I've been trying to find a way to make sure we don't always cut off either the Liberal or the NDP. In the PROC rotation, you could lose that last eight minutes. We've been noticing that. I'm trying to find ways in that other committee to make sure that over time there's balance.

I think the basic decision is whether you want a longer first round of seven, seven, seven, seven, which has pluses and minuses to it. Sometimes seven feels very long for a new MP. You can split that time so that you each have three and a half minutes. It's a little easier, frankly, to split seven than five.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Thank you for that context, Mr. Chair.

Perhaps I can add one thing. Some of you are lawyers who have practised. You can anticipate how long your questions are. But I'll tell you, some witnesses sometimes don't comply with how long you think their response will be. I had situations, when I was parliamentary secretary for trade, where I had a number of questions to ask in a seven-minute round. But on trade deals, where a union leader would go on about something, I got one question.

That extra minute in the first round doesn't seem like much, but if somebody is cut off in the second round, at least they had a first round that was as substantive as possible.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Chair, I've quickly done the math on this.

It seems, by way of the amendment, the first round would be allocated 28 minutes and the second round would be allocated 23 minutes. But I think we had proposed at the outset that round one would have 24 minutes and round two would have 26 minutes. Somehow, there was some rounding here and we gained an extra minute. Presumably it should be evenly spread out. There's sort of a "plus one minute" gain to the first round.

The Chair: For all intents and purposes, it would be the same. You will find in my style of chairing that I am loath to cut off a witness mid-sentence or mid-paragraph, I like them to finish their thought. I'm not loath to cut off a member. If the witness starts at six minutes and 35 seconds and continues to seven minutes and 15 or 20 seconds, I allow that. That's been my practice. They're our witnesses, and I think we have to be generous. If you make a long statement and go over time, I'm pretty rigid on that. The 51 or 50 is not going to matter. The reality will be we'll get about 47 real minutes in because they take longer.

Is that your experience?

An hon. member: Absolutely.

• (1125)

The Chair: I am starting to sense a consensus around following PROC. Am I judging that correctly?

I think, then, we could amend the motion that was presented and amended by Mr. O'Toole. We'll vote on the amendment, which is the speaking rotation as suggested by PROC.

The Chair: All in favour of the amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Good. What a harmonious committee. Doesn't this bode well? Just wait.

Is there a motion on "Appending Dissenting/Supplementary Opinions to Committee Reports"?

A voice: We don't need that. It's part of the standing orders.

The Chair: Are there any other further motions?

Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have one on priority of government legislation.

The Chair: That could be a motion.

Ms. Pam Damoff: "That government bills take precedence over all other work of the committee" be deleted.

The Chair: I'm not exactly sure how to do this procedurally.

An hon. member: We don't have to delete it.

The Chair: We just don't adopt it. There is no motion, then, on the priority of government legislation.

Mr. O'Toole.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, congratulations on your first unanimous, very harmonious session here. It's invigorating.

But as per your comment that you're the chair for all members, since we have such an esteemed group here, I think we should use this time to talk committee business for a few moments just because we're on the edge of a constituency week. As some of the newer members may appreciate, we've talked about providing travel and expenses for witnesses, but often when you're getting law professors and union leaders and these sorts of thought leaders, scheduling is a real challenge. My suggestion would be that we at least talk about committee business so that by next week some invitations can go out to witnesses to appear. Otherwise, we essentially lose a month of time. If we go into this two weeks from now, you then have a lag of two weeks to get in people's schedules to have them appear before our committee.

The official opposition feels there are two issues that deserve attention by this committee, the first is the Senate report from June on terrorism and radicalization, which I think explored a number of very interesting and important public policy issues, the second is the security screening of the Syrian refugee initiative. Our preference is in those two orders because the Senate committee spent considerable time on their report, and it was issued as the last Parliament wound up. I think it would behoove our committee to call some witnesses in relation to some of the findings, or on the Syrian issue, which has certainly been a priority of the new government and has received a lot of public attention. Security screening is a concern of many Canadians.

My recommendation would be that the committee decide our first issue of examination, and then the parties submit witnesses by next Wednesday so that we can start substantive meetings within a week or so of returning from our constituency week.

• (1130)

The Chair: Are there comments or questions?

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Chair, having just listened to my colleague's suggestion, I think one of the things we might consider doing as a committee is to have the subcommittee on agenda and procedure struck with its full complement. Pursuant to the language of the second routine motion, which was put forth this morning, we could have the two government members elected or appointed or acclaimed. Then that subcommittee could meet to discuss some of the priorities that Mr. O'Toole has just mentioned.

The Chair: Just to comment, under the motion we will have two government members. They could rotate, but I believe the government side has picked a couple of members to be on that committee at this time, so they would attend on behalf of the five of you.

We have a proposal, then, that we have a review of a Senate report and a consideration of a topic. We have a counter-proposal that those would go to the agenda committee to discuss and then come back to this committee with a recommendation on our agenda.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: I think that's exactly right, Mr. Chair. I think it makes sense from the point of view of having a steering committee that prioritizes the business of this committee.

The Chair: Mr. O'Toole.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, with respect to my friend's suggestion, a subcommittee on agenda is essentially meant to be in place for forward-looking business, as the committee is seized with things and as members of Parliament are torn in various different directions with demands. We have the whole committee here, as opposed to a subcommittee. Agendas are fairly light. We're on Bill C-4 in terms of the legislative calendar, so why would we defer to a smaller group of this group to set the first agenda topic?

I'm suggesting we choose the first agenda topic, so that we can get witness names in by next week. I'm not saying you have to pull them out of your briefcase today. I'm saying next week, so that we can have some substantive hearings within a few weeks. I think Canadians expect that.

Some committees, in my experience, did not really use the subcommittee if the committee talked committee business on a regular basis. We have everyone here. This is our suggestion. In fact, we've put two items up for the group to have consensus on. I think we'd all agree that both subjects are issues that Canadians would like a committee to look into in some detail. Rather than defer this to a smaller group of this group, why don't we take a moment, come up with how many hearing days we think the topic would need, and then submit witnesses by next Wednesday?

I think it's a reasonable request, Mr. Chair.

• (1135)

The Chair: I remind members that we are in a public meeting right now, and often committee business is discussed in camera to make those decisions. If committee members wanted to go in camera, we could do that. I just wanted to alert new members to this. Committees do that differently. Often there are public meetings and then committee business is done in camera.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, with respect to that, and with respect to the sunshine of sunny ways, I think agenda topics should not be in camera. Maybe my friend from the NDP might have a

suggestion in that regard. I don't suggest we plan our agenda for the entire session. All I'm saying is let's put an important subject on our radar for when we return, so that we can start the process of allowing the clerk and the analysts to make sure we reach out to key witnesses.

The Chair: Mr. Dubé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a small concern, which brings me to ask my Conservative colleagues whether they have a motion. After all, the length of studies is an important issue. Nothing is currently on the agenda. I appreciate them wanting to start something, so that we would have work to do.

I'm also happy to see how appreciative the Conservatives now are of committee work. I will take it where I can.

That being said, my concern over the length of studies just has to do with the fact that we will start discussing other topics. I wouldn't want us to get trapped in very long studies on certain topics, just in case we have to look into other matters, even bills, over the next few weeks.

[*English*]

As for the steering committee, I do have one concern with that, and I will echo Mr. O'Toole's concern, which is when we would meet. We're already at Thursday, and we're going back to our constituency. By the time a steering committee meeting could be scheduled, we will be back in Ottawa two weeks from now.

The Chair: Could I just review where we are with that? We have a proposal to have two immediate studies. We could choose one or the other to begin. We have a proposal that it go to the subcommittee on agenda.

I think I'm hearing that we perhaps defer until a further meeting, but not that we do it by an agenda committee.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: If I may, Chair, perhaps something was lost in translation. I'm just wondering if the Conservatives have a text for their motion and have a specific prescription for these studies in mind, so that we don't get trapped in a never-ending study on a particular issue, given that anything could pop up over the next weeks and months.

The Chair: Mr. O'Toole, then Ms. Damoff.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Through you, Mr. Chair, certainly this was intended to be committee business, which does not require a motion and a discussion. My one failing in this is that I should have tabled this in a report, so I offer my apologies. But we can get copies in both official languages to the clerk.

As I said, it was published in June, and I'm sure our keen members of this committee on all sides have already been devouring this important report anyway. We could table that report, and the recommendations could form the substance of probably four to five meetings. We would work with the clerk on witness allocation.

The Chair: Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Those are two important issues.

I can think of a long list of other equally important issues for this committee to look at. I would rather we did it well than in a rush, and that we picked issues that all of us can agree are important. While those are two important issues, I think we need time to look at some other issues and decide what we, as a committee, want to do. I think the right place to do that is on the subcommittee. Then that decision can be brought back to us and we can make a decision on a number of issues, not just two.

I think we need to really think long and hard about what issues we as a committee want to look at. There are a number of others. I could list which ones are important to me personally, but I'm not going to do that, because there are quite a few. I think we need to look at all of them and, as a committee, decide which are best. I think the best place to start that is on the subcommittee.

The Chair: Mr. O'Toole.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I certainly agree with my colleague that it could be a very healthy agenda for this committee, which is an important one for Canada.

That said, we don't start devouring that healthy complement of work until we actually get our first number of witnesses. In fairness, she may not know, but doing that sometimes takes some weeks once witness names are submitted. We've already had several months of Parliament during which this committee has not sat. I'm just trying to make sure that we make this an effective use of our time.

I'm not saying what our agenda will be for the entire session. If we don't want to start the process on just one agenda item, the alternative would be that since all of us have the two hours of this committee booked, we could adjourn and have an instant meeting of the subcommittee right now and discuss the same issues.

The point I tried to make to my friend earlier was that the subcommittee is intended to be a smaller group that you can get together to move forward on a working basis. Since we have the whole group here, with no agenda and a very light legislative calendar, why would we not at least pick the first topic of examination? If that's not the consensus, I'd be happy to adjourn this meeting and have the subcommittee meet to do the same thing.

• (1140)

The Chair: I'm hearing that some members of the committee are not ready to engage in the agenda discussion yet, and would like some time to think about it. It could then either go to the subcommittee or come to the first committee meeting after the break.

I'm think I'm hearing from members who have not been in the previous government, or who have not had committee experience, that they're looking for more time. I'm hearing also from someone who has ideas that they want to get going on. I respect both of those.

I also am hearing Mr. Dubé saying that the subcommittee probably cannot meet until the following week after

[*Translation*]

the break week.

[*English*]

We would take time in the next seven days to plan some agenda items. We could have a full in camera meeting at our first meeting after the break week to discuss our agenda over the next several months.

I would remind you that our Parliament actually was convened weeks after the last election, unlike the new government that was formed in 2006, which took several months after they formed government to come back. So I think we're not delaying; we're actually a very proactive Parliament and a proactive government.

I sense, though, that committee members are asking for some time to engage in what the issues should be. The real question may be this: does that go to a subcommittee that meets between now and a week from Tuesday, or do we plan our first meeting after the break week and do agenda?

Ms. Pam Damoff: I like the idea of it coming back to the full committee, at our first meeting back. We can all have a discussion on the items that we think the committee should look at. Then we can go from there.

The Chair: Would you like to make that a motion?

Ms. Pam Damoff: I move that the full committee meet on Tuesday, February 16.

The Chair: Would that be an in camera meeting or a public meeting?

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'll defer on that, because I'm not sure which is better for this.

The Chair: We could decide that on the day of; that is appropriate as well. You could leave that out of the motion, if you'd like.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay. Let's leave it out of the motion.

The Chair: There's a motion that we plan a full meeting to discuss our work plan on Tuesday, February 16.

Mr. Dubé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: I am okay with that, but I would like to clarify something we have not discussed.

The beauty of the subcommittee, when it comes to the agenda, is that it enables us to meet outside normal committee hours and, consequently, save the committee some time, especially by eliminating endless debates like this one today.

Does the committee want to take advantage of that flexibility in order to use the committee at large, if I may use that expression, to tackle more concrete proposals so as to gain some efficiency?

The Chair: Does your proposal have to do with the amount of time this kind of a meeting takes?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: No, not really, but I would maybe like to have something clarified.

I know from experience that, over the past few years, other committees have operated in this way. I am wondering what yours and my other colleagues' intentions are.

Basically, I am wondering what the use of the subcommittee is if its meetings are always held at the same time as the committee's meetings.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Mr. Chair, if I may, I would like to say something.

The Chair: Mr. Di Iorio, go ahead.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate my colleague's comments. I want to point out that those two things are not mutually exclusive. Our colleague said that she was leaving it open only for the first meeting. We will figure out a way to do things, learn to work together, to know each other and to develop our own ways and customs. We are individuals motivated by a deep desire to carry out productive and effective work in the service of Canadians.

My colleague's comment was not about the first meeting. My colleague can be reassured that the subcommittee will be able to hold meetings. Based on the discussions we have had, it is already planned that the subcommittee can meet at times other than those set for the actual committee's meetings.

• (1145)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Spengemann.

[Translation]

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm favourable to my colleague's motion. Those issues will give us an opportunity to reconnect with our constituents.

[English]

We're all newly elected members. Some of us are re-elected members to the committee. We can connect at home and see what the temperature is on the two subjects that were introduced by Mr. O'Toole, but also the rest of the basket. There are some very important, intensive discussions going on in the communities on a number of projects that this committee is very well positioned to address. Without seeking delay for the sake of having extra time, I would support the step of reconnecting with our constituents during this coming week and then having a more informed view of what Canadians would like this committee to address in the short term.

The Chair: If I can just review, we have a motion on the floor that we meet on Tuesday, February 16, to discuss future business.

That does not preclude a meeting of the subcommittee *en avance*. We could do a subcommittee meeting. However, the motion on the floor is that we have a meeting on the 16th to discuss business.

Mr. O'Toole.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I enjoyed your commentary at the outset about being chair for all. I don't think comparison of when the 2006 government returned to when this government returned helps the conversation, but your point was that the government did form in November and called

Parliament back. Now essentially we have had three months of inaction on this committee. My modest proposal is to start the witness collection for at least the first topic. I don't think I would need to consult my constituents to say terrorism and issues related to radicalization are some things that the public safety committee should be seized with.

There might be differences of opinion on whether it would be first versus third, but my proposal was to make sure that we start allowing the time to have witnesses prepared and contacted. Otherwise we will have to explain to his constituents and to mine why this committee has not sat on a substantive basis for over four months, approaching half a year. With a number of agenda items, as my friend mentioned earlier, why would we not start at least to get the first one rolling? To be fair, that's why the Conservative Party brought two subjects. This is not to say it's our way or the highway, but it would allow the time for preparations so that by March we would at least get to hear a few witnesses. If we build in a few more weeks of delay so that people can consult, we essentially are looking at nothing substantive until April and that concerns the official opposition.

The Chair: I think we've heard that now a few times.

Any new thoughts on this topic?

Mr. Mendicino.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: I'm going to propose that we call a vote.

The Chair: I want to make sure that there aren't thoughts that have not been expressed.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: I have more commentary to add before we go to a vote, Mr. Chair.

The one suggestion I did propose that was perhaps lost in the wider discussion on this first topic was the fact that I'm assuming we have the full committee time booked in all our schedules. All members of this committee are here. We've done the routine business. Why would we not adjourn and have the subcommittee meet now to be proactive, then we can have a more detailed discussion of the agenda? It could be in camera. That would be a motion I put forward, which I think would be a better use of all our time.

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor so I can't rule that in order. I also note that the vice-chair of the committee is not present at this time. I will respect the fact that we have elected Mr. Miller to be the vice-chair. I am not going to entertain that motion. We are beginning to repeat ourselves so I would like to call the question on a meeting on February 16 to consider the agenda and future business of the public safety and national security committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: That being the case, we probably don't have further business at this meeting.

I'm going to adjourn this meeting until February 16.

The meeting is adjourned.

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