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Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

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Wednesday, February 3, 2016

—
Chair

The Honourable Judy Sgro

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

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• (1545)

[Translation]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Andrew Bartholomew Chaplin): 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. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Clerk, I would like to put forward the name of the Honourable Judy Sgro, please.

The Clerk: Are there any further nominations?

Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): I second that.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Hardie.

There being no other nominations, it has been moved by Mr. Badawey that Madam Sgro be elected as chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Judy Sgro duly elected chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: At this stage, I would like to invite Madam Sgro to take the chair.

The Chair (Hon. Judy Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Let me begin by thanking my colleagues for their confidence.

I noticed that no one raised any objections, and I want to thank all my other colleagues on the committee for their support as well. I very much look forward to working with them.

Would the committee like to proceed with the election of the vice-chairs, Mr. Clerk, as appropriate?

[Translation]

The Clerk: Thank you, Madam Chair.

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.

Madam Watts.

Ms. Dianne Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): I move that Luc Berthold be first vice-chair.

[Translation]

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

Are there any further motions?

[English]

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried.

[Translation]

I declare Mr. Berthold 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.

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

Madam Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Thank you.

I would like to nominate Linda Duncan as the second vice-chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Madam Block that Madam Duncan be elected as second vice-chair. Are there any other motions?

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Clerk.

I want to take a moment to say that we have Kate Young and Pablo Rodriguez here as the parliamentary secretaries who will be here to assist the committee. They will be sitting in their new positions and will be here to offer support and advice, but will certainly not participate as voting members.

As we move forward, there are a variety of housekeeping motions that we have to deal with, but I do want to stress one particular thing to all of my colleagues who are here, which is that we're starting a new term in office and it's certainly my intention to work in a very non-partisan manner. I think we're hearing that message all around, and I certainly welcome the other members of the committee—and I'm not going to call you opposition members—to work together to advance the interests of our country.

I think that if we put those interests first and leave the partisan stuff outside the door—we can use that in QP—we can work as much as possible in a non-partisan way here to truly go forward with this particular committee to build this country and to respond to the needs of our cities and our provinces. I can assure you that I will stress at all times absolute fairness and equality among all of us as colleagues, and not anything else.

We have some housekeeping things to be done today so that we are able to move forward.

The first one, Mr. Clerk, is on the services of the analyst. Shall I read that out?

The Clerk: Yes, if you wish. We just need a mover.

The Chair: I'll read it first and then ask for the mover:

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, and that these services be requested at the discretion of the Chair.

The Chair: It is moved by Sean Fraser and seconded by Ken Hardie.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: These are very much routine motions that are passed at every committee at the beginning.

The second one concerns the subcommittee on agenda and procedure:

That the Sub-committee on Agenda and Procedure be composed of 5 members, including the Chair, the two Vice-Chairs, and two government members; that quorum of the Sub-committee consist of at least three (3) members, one of whom shall be a member from the opposition; that each member of the sub-committee be permitted to have one assistant attend any meetings of the Sub-Committee on Agenda and Procedure; and that, in addition, each party be permitted to have one staff member from a House Officer attend any meetings.

The Chair: It is moved by Mr. Badawey.

Go ahead, Ms. Duncan.

• (1550)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Chair, I appreciate your opening remarks, and I hope that we can actually work together collaboratively.

In keeping with the subcommittee on agenda and procedure being non-partisan, balanced, and collaborative, I would like to recommend that it be composed of the chair, the two vice-chairs, and one government member only. In that way, we'll make sure that all members of the committee are fairly represented.

Without seeing in writing what you are proposing, it's hard for me to amend. Could you reiterate it?

The Chair: Again, this is exactly the same procedure we've had every other time:

That the Sub-committee on Agenda and Procedure be composed of 5 members, including the Chair, the two Vice-Chairs, and two government members; that quorum of the Sub-committee consist of at least three (3) members, one of whom shall be a member from the opposition; that each member of the sub-committee be permitted to have one assistant attend any meetings of the Sub-Committee on Agenda and Procedure; and that, in addition, each party be permitted to have one staff member from a House Officer attend any meetings.

The Chair: Would you like to elaborate a little bit more clearly now?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to amend the proposal you have tabled and remove “two government members” and instead say “one government member”. I would also like to remove the proposal that the quorum would require only one opposition member.

The Chair: Are there any comments on the amendments proposed by Ms. Duncan?

Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Chair, I have just one question. In the subcommittee, does the chair actually have a vote?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Vance Badawey: The chair has a vote?

The Chair: I'm checking with Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: It's the usual practice that it's only in the case of a tie.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Only in the case of a tie?

The Chair: Yes, only in the case of a tie.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are there any further comments on Ms. Duncan's proposed amendment?

Then I suggest that we call the vote.

I'm sorry, Mr. Iacono.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Duncan, why are you proposing that it be one person and not two?

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Why? Because we already will have two members on the committee representing the government.

In keeping with what the chair has proposed, which is that this be non-partisan, balanced, and collaborative, I think it's incumbent that we make sure that our subcommittee.... The subcommittee is very important, because in many ways it determines the subject areas we're going to move forward on, other procedures that we're changing, and recommendations on witnesses, and so forth. I think it's very important that everybody at the table have an equal voice. There would be a very fair representation for the governing party with the chair and a government member, so we see no reason for two additional government members.

I also raised a concern with regard to having only one opposition party member there. I would hope that all the voices on the committee are important. From time to time we may have different opinions, so I think it's important that the quorum include at least one representative of the parties in the meetings of the subcommittee.

The Chair: Then I would call the vote on Ms. Duncan's amendment.

I'm sorry. Were there any other comments?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Chair, what are we voting on, exactly? Ms. Duncan has added two things in what she just said. I would just like you to summarize what we will be voting on.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. We'll clarify that.

[Translation]

The Clerk: Ms. Duncan moved that the words "two government members" be replaced by "one government member". If I understood correctly, the quorum for the subcommittee would consist in at least three members, including one member from each opposition party.

[English]

Ms. Duncan, did I get that straight?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Yes.

The Clerk: Thank you.

The Chair: Could I just reiterate and confirm a point with the clerk?

The recommendations from the subcommittee come back to the full committee for discussion and a vote and any other amendments or changes, correct?

The Clerk: Yes, Madam Chair, usually in the form of a report from the subcommittee considered in camera, which can then be amended by the committee, the final form of which would be published in the minutes.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

All right. We have Ms. Duncan's amendment.

Ms. Duncan has asked for a recorded vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 5; yeas 4)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move on to the motion on reduced quorum.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Point of order, Madam Chair—

The Chair: I'm sorry. We voted on the amendment, and now we have to vote on the actual motion. We're now voting on the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. It's not amended at all. It's staying in its original form.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now we'll move on to the next one. It's on the reduced quorum:

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 four (4) members are present, including one member of the opposition and one member of the government; and, that, in the case of previously scheduled meetings taking place outside the Parliamentary Precinct, the Committee members in attendance only be required to wait for 15 minutes following the designated start of the meeting before they may proceed to hear witnesses and receive evidence, regardless of whether opposition or government members are present.

Are there any comments on the reduced quorum?

Seeing no comments, we need a mover. It is moved by Mr. Hardie.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We'll move on to the one on the distribution of documents:

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

I need a mover.

• (1600)

Ms. Linda Duncan: On a point of order, Madam Chair, are you not taking these in the order in the book?

The Chair: The clerk indicated to me that he didn't think everybody had the numbers—

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'm looking at the speaking order—

The Chair: That was the part that the.... Do you have that in front of you? The clerk indicated that he didn't think you did.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I do.

The Clerk: They only have the one from the last Parliament.

The Chair: They should have this before I ask them. Can we get a copy of this before we move forward on it?

The Clerk: Do we have it in both languages?

The Chair: All right. I'm going to leave that part aside until we see if we can get a copy to the interpreters.

I'm going to continue on with the distribution of documents and go back to the time allotment issue, all right?

I believe everybody has heard the motion on the distribution of documents. It's moved by Mr. Sikand.

Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Luc Berthold: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I don't have that document in French.

Okay, *merci*.

The Chair: You all have copies of it now, right? The report had already been sent out, according to Mr. Clerk.

The motion on the distribution of documents has been moved by Mr. Sikand.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Motion six is on working meals:

That the Committee hereby authorize the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the Chair, to make the necessary arrangements to provide for working meals, as may be required, and that the cost of these meals be charged to the Committee budget.

That is moved by Mr. Fraser.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is witnesses' expenses:

That, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses, not exceeding one (1) representative per organization; and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

That is moved by Mr. Iacono.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next motion has to do with staff at in camera meetings:

That each Committee member in attendance be permitted to have one staff member attend any in camera meetings, and that, in addition, each party be permitted to have one staff member from a House Officer attend in camera meetings.

That is moved by Mr. Hardie.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next motion is with regard to in camera meeting transcripts:

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.

That is moved by Ms. Duncan.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is notice of motions:

That forty-eight (48) hour notice be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the Committee; that the motion be filed and distributed to members by the Clerk in both official languages, and that completed motions received by 5 p.m. be distributed to members the same day .

That is moved by Ms. Watts.

Ms. Block.

•(1605)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Could I speak to that motion?

The Chair: Of course.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you.

Madam Chair, we would like to propose that completed motions should be received by 6 p.m. rather than 5 p.m., simply because of the timing of our committee being 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. If something came up and we wanted to submit a motion, that would

give us time after committee to do it in order that it could be considered two days later.

The Chair: That sounds sensible.

Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Just for clarification, when it says “considered”, we mean discussed. We don't mean tabled. Sometimes motions come forward during the course of a proceeding, but I'm presuming this deals with the actual debate and discussion of a motion. Am I correct?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thanks.

The Chair: Rather than having a separate vote, does everyone agree with Ms. Block's suggestion that we change it to 6 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Ms. Watts is moving this.

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

The Chair: The next issue has to do with the time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses:

That the witnesses from any one organization be allowed 10 minutes to make their opening statements; and that the rotation by time would be as follows: Round one, Conservatives, six minutes; two, Liberals, six minutes; three, NDP, six minutes; four, Liberals, six minutes. Round two, Liberals, six minutes; two, Conservatives, six minutes; three, Liberals, six minutes; four, Conservatives, five minutes; five, NDP, three minutes.

Do I have a motion to adopt the proposed breakdown?

•(1610)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Chair, it's pretty hard for me to absorb that without seeing it in writing. Could you please read that again?

The Chair: Yes, and my apologies that I don't have it for you in writing. Let me read that again.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Madam Chair, I can give her my copy.

An hon. member: We can share.

The Chair: Ms. Block, did you give her a copy?

Okay, one of our members will bring it over. That makes it easier.

Could I have a mover for the time for opening remarks and the questioning of witnesses?

Mr. Vance Badawey: I so move.

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Chair, I would like to propose an amendment, perhaps not to the order, but to the timing that is allotted to each speaker. I would propose that the first round of questioning be for seven minutes, and then every questioner after the first round be given five minutes.

The Chair: Is there any discussion or comment?

Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan: If I could speak to the amendment, I'd certainly endorse that. I think it makes more sense, particularly because sometimes there is no interest even in a second round and it gives an opportunity for more fulsome questioning in the first round.

The Chair: It tends to vary on each committee, depending on what the issues are and how much time is needed from that perspective as we move forward on these....

In looking at it, we'll try to be as balanced as possible. Certainly it has to be more generous than having to be based on representation in the House. However, I think it's important that we all have equal time to participate as we move forward and to feel we are a valued part of the committee. I've tried to ensure that it is broken down in an appropriate way.

Are there any other comments on the amendment that is proposed by Ms. Block?

I need a mover for this motion.

A voice: Wasn't that Mr. Badawey?

The Chair: Yes, I'm sorry, it was Mr. Badawey.

Yes, Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I thought you called all in favour.

The Chair: No, not yet.

So you're suggesting that in round one it would be moved to seven minutes.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Yes.

The Chair: And round two?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Every round after that would be five minutes.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion?

All those in favour of Ms. Block's amendment changing it from six minutes to seven minutes in round one, and in round two changing it to five minutes rather than the way it's listed in front of you?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Madam Chair, I have a question.

[*English*]

The Chair: I believe Mr. Iacono has a question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, Madam Chair.

They want to change the first round of questioning so that members of the committee would have seven minutes at their disposal. During the second round, the first three interventions would go from six to five minutes. What about the fourth and fifth interventions? Initially, the fourth would have lasted five minutes and the last one three minutes. Does this mean that the two last interventions would also be of five minutes each?

•(1615)

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: That is what I've suggested. The first round would be seven minutes, and every round of questioning after that would be five minutes.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: For everyone?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Chair, can we separate the motion and vote on round one and then on round two, please?

The Chair: Yes, of course. That's not a problem.

Is there any other discussion on this particular issue? Are there any other thoughts as we move forward?

Mr. Berthold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: I think we have to adopt a whole. This is the time that is allocated. We can't separate it into two since the one goes with the other. It is a whole.

[*English*]

The Chair: I think it's up to the committee. I don't see where that's going to make a significant difference.

I'll confer....

Ms. Linda Duncan: If I may comment, Madam Chair, we have a lot of new members, and a lot of new members on the committee, and I thought it would be useful to add that the proposal the Conservatives have put forward actually gives us an additional free one minute.

What often happens in the committee reviews, depending on the witness, is that the chair will say that the committee has a little more time and will ask if any of the members want to have a little more time. I think that what the Conservatives are proposing is good, because it actually gives us one additional minute. I think that's always a good safeguard. The chair then can open it up, say that we have more time left before we adjourn, and ask if anybody else has any follow-up questions.

I think that giving us that additional minute per panel, or even per witness, is going to help, and we'll add that up. If we don't have additional questions, then that's fine, and we can adjourn early, but I think this is a good way to proceed.

The Chair: It comes out at 53 minutes with Ms. Block's amendment, which takes away a bit of the time from witnesses who are here to do their presentation and make general comments. That's the reason these things are targeted so tightly; it's to make sure we have plenty of time for comments.

Mr. Badawey has a question.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Chair, I have a quick question with respect to procedure. This is obviously going to be embedded in procedure as we run our meetings. Is there an opportunity if we do have more time to waive procedure at the discretion of the committee?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Vance Badawey: So we could actually waive procedure. If in fact we do have more time, the chair could declare that we have more time; someone could put a motion forward to waive procedure; it could be voted on by the committee, and that extra time can be given.

The Chair: Of course. The committee is always the master of its own time.

Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I'll just follow up on a comment you made in terms of taking time away from the witnesses. With every study we may undertake, I would assume that when we propose witnesses and what the meetings are going to look like, we would determine whether we have one panel per hour, or have two hours with witnesses. I'm thinking that while it sounds like we're taking away time from witnesses, should we have three or four witnesses, they would still get their 10 minutes, and then the time remaining would start to follow this format. Also, we do have two-hour meetings.

• (1620)

The Chair: I think it's important that we be fair to everybody on the committee and that we give everyone a full opportunity to get their comments in and their questions answered as well.

Is there any further discussion on Ms. Block's amendment?

Mr. Badawey, the difficulty with trying to split between rounds one and two is that we're talking minutes, and if we add minutes in the upper round we have to take them away from round two, right? We're unable to split, so I think at this point....

Are there any other suggestions or comments?

Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I have just one more.

From my experience in eight years here in committee, depending on what subject area we're covering, there is usually at least one person per party who has decided they're going to take the lead, and the decision is made by that party who is going to get the seven minutes. That is the reason often in committee the first round is allocated to somebody to give a little bit more time.

There has also been a practice that if I need only five minutes, I'm going to give the other two minutes to my colleague. It actually balances out. You work that out among yourselves. While this may look rigid, when you actually get down to the committee review, I think that what the Conservatives are putting forward looks like a fair allocation. What often happens is that a member will even waive their time and say they'd like their colleague to continue the line of questioning. Not everybody is always going to want to use their full time on everything, so there is a lot more flexibility than is simply presented in this allocation of time.

The Chair: Who is the mover on that one? I need a mover for this motion on time allotment and how we're going to deal with it.

It's moved by Mr. Badawey.

There is no further discussion being held on the amendment being put forward by Ms. Block.

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: We'll vote on the original motion that was put forward, which consists of round one: Conservatives, six minutes; Liberals six minutes; NDP, six minutes; Liberals, six minutes; and round two: Liberals, six minutes; Conservatives, six minutes;

Liberals, six minutes; Conservatives, five minutes; NDP, three minutes.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I do want to say, though, that as the chair, I will be attempting to be as flexible as possible with our meetings to ensure that everyone gets full opportunity to participate and move forward.

Mr. Clerk, is there any other housekeeping that has to be done?

• (1625)

The Clerk: I believe that's all we have.

The Chair: Now that we have that part behind us, I have a suggestion. Given the fact that there's a break week next week, and the steering committee's first opportunity to meet will be after we come back from break week, I want to suggest to the committee that if you like, I could turn around and have the clerk invite the two ministers to come for that first week when we come back, until the steering committee has had a chance to meet the Tuesday before our meeting, if possible.

If we invite the two ministers to come in on the Wednesday, which is our first meeting after we come back, and if the ministers are not available, we could try to invite Infrastructure Canada to give us an overview of where we are with the infrastructure programs.

Another option would be that we could invite FCM, or AMO, or the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, to give us something to do that first week.

We're looking to fill that first week until the steering committee's recommendations come back, which would be on the Wednesday, our first meeting, I hope. It takes us a period of time to get your witnesses in here, so my suggestion is that two ministers be invited, and hopefully they could come, but as alternatives for the clerk, Infrastructure Canada could be a second option, and a third option to fill that first week we're back could be representatives from FCM, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, any of our municipal partners that represent the organizations. This would give the clerk something to work with while we're away so that we can get to work on the Wednesday that we come back.

Ms. Block, and then Ms. Duncan.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Chair, I was going to seek unanimous consent to propose a motion that the committee invite the Minister of Transport to appear in front of this committee before March 15 for a televised session to discuss his mandate letter.

I was going to do that because I know we are going to head into a break week and it might be good to have something that we come back to.

I would make that motion if the committee is willing to entertain it.

The Chair: You're saying specifically the Minister of Transport?

Ms. Dianne Watts: Do you want a separate motion for the Minister of Infrastructure?

The Chair: My suggestion was that we invite both of them, because we really don't know what their schedules and availability are.

Mrs. Kelly Block: That is why we said March 15. Before March 15 we don't know.

The Chair: Okay. Are there any other comments?

Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'd like to speak to the motion. I think it's an excellent one. It gives flexibility on the dates.

I would propose that if we hear back from them, hopefully by the end of this week, and if neither minister is available on the Wednesday we come back, that instead the steering committee should meet, because we really should sit down and talk about what we think are the priorities for the committee before we start inviting people.

The Chair: The steering committee would be meeting independent of the large committee, and I'm hoping that the steering committee would be available on the Tuesday we come back, which would be February 16, and then be able to report back to the main committee on the Wednesday at our meeting.

Ms. Linda Duncan: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: We can't presume that, which is the reason I suggested that we invite either the Minister for Infrastructure or the Minister of Transport to see if they would also be available to come that Wednesday so we would have enough to do on that agenda to move forward. That was the suggestion I put forward.

Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: I have a couple of suggestions for the committee to consider.

First is to establish by motion the steering committee today.

Second is to try to come to some resolve with respect to which day we would initially meet.

Third, with respect to the motion on the floor, I would suggest that we dedicate one meeting per minister. That way we have the time to discuss the issues with that minister. If the first is the Minister of Transport, that would be appropriate, and that's fine. Then of course we could send an invitation to the Minister of Infrastructure following that.

The Chair: We certainly can put the invite out. The problem becomes the ministers' schedules. That becomes the bigger challenge.

Mr. Vance Badawey: If I may, Madam Chair, I would like to see one minister invited at a time, versus both ministers at the same time, just to give us time to dedicate to those questions and those thoughts from both sides.

The Chair: We could invite one minister for one of our meetings, and subsequently the other, whichever one is available for the first or second meeting. The clerk will certainly do that at the direction of the committee.

The other thing is to make sure we have sufficient work to do. If neither minister is available the first Wednesday we are back, which is February 16, I have suggested that Infrastructure Canada be asked to come in and give us an overview. If not, we will discuss some recommendations on another issue.

Is that something we need a motion for?

A voice: Someone should move it.

• (1630)

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Get the motion on the table.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I'm not sure if the committee gave unanimous consent to entertain my motion, but I did propose a motion, so we have copies, in both official languages, if people would like to see it. We could circulate the motion to the committee. Then if we vote on that, it gives direction to invite the Minister of Transport.

The Chair: That's fine. We're happy to have him.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Is it critical that we have the Minister of Transport on that day? I'm just being sensitive to the scheduling. Would it make a difference which minister came in on that day, or does it have to be the Minister of Transport?

Mrs. Kelly Block: The motion just says to invite the minister to appear before the committee by March 15, so it's taking into consideration that he has a very full schedule and it will be at his discretion.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent for Ms. Block to introduce that motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Ms. Watts.

Ms. Dianne Watts: Well, being that it's only the Minister of Infrastructure, I'll duplicate the motion for the Minister of Infrastructure to appear before the 15th. It's exactly the same motion, only if we can insert his name...

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent to present that motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'm troubled that the suggestion is that we can just hold the subcommittee sometime. The best way to ensure that everybody on the subcommittee can attend the subcommittee is to have it at a time when we normally meet. Given that we don't have anything scheduled for the next while, I would like to recommend if neither minister is available next Wednesday, that instead the subcommittee meet to try to plan potential items for discussion in addition to the ministers, or related to the minister's business.

I'm already looking like I'm very busy on the Tuesday. I think it's important that at least with the first couple of subcommittee meetings we endeavour to have as many people there as possible. Otherwise you're going to be phoning around trying to find a date, or a date will be chosen unilaterally and some people won't be available because we have busy schedules.

I think it's really important for the certainty and the flow of the committee that at a very early stage, in addition to the ministers, which we all agree is a good idea to have them come.... There are a number of important matters which I would like to be brought forward in a sensible way through the subcommittee rather than just throwing out motions. I would like to strongly recommend that in one of the first two meetings that the subcommittee choose that time because we will all be available.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on Ms. Duncan's suggestion?

Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I think we would support that suggestion if it works to have the subcommittee meet during our time on the first Wednesday we are back. That provides the ministers with a little more flexibility for appearing possibly the following week. It would then inform our discussion on future business when we come back together as a whole committee.

The Chair: Ms. Duncan's suggestion is that the Wednesday that we've had this lengthy discussion on, which is February 16, our first meeting back, be a meeting of the steering committee, not the whole committee but the steering committee only.

Ms. Linda Duncan: In addition, during that meeting we will also be discussing what kinds of items this committee would like to move forward. In each of the caucuses there will be some discussion about what they would like to suggest their representatives on the committee bring forth.

• (1635)

The Chair: Is everyone in favour, then?

Do we need a motion for that?

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Chair, if I may, I have a point of clarification, or maybe a point of order.

Should we not establish the steering committee first?

The Chair: The committee is automatically—

Mr. Vance Badawey: It's already established?

The Chair: Yes. It's automatically the two vice-chairs, the chair and two members of the government. If the government members are prepared to suggest who they'd like to be on that committee, it is an appropriate time.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I propose that Mr. Hardie and Mr. Badawey be the Liberal members on the steering committee.

The Chair: All right, that's fine. Thank you very much.

We have agreed, then, that on Wednesday, February 16, we are going to have a meeting of the steering committee.

Mr. Ken Hardie: That's the 17th.

The Chair: Yes, it is the 17th. Let's get our days straight.

Is everybody all right with that? So we can put to bed the issue of having the minister because we have decided we're going to do a meeting of the steering committee, which will be all of us.

Mr. Clerk, are there any further housekeeping items or things that have to be done today?

The Clerk: I hope not.

The Chair: Okay, are there any further comments or discussion?

Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I have one point of clarification on what you just said. When you said "which will be all of us", you were meaning...?

The Chair: The steering committee. It would just be a meeting of the steering committee on that Wednesday.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Okay, great.

The Chair: I think we all should be open to listening to each other's thoughts, whether or not you're on the steering committee. I think the participation of all members is important, and if you have some.... Granted it all comes back to this committee anyway as a whole, but I think in the discussion, it's always open and welcome.

There is no further discussion and no further work to be done.

Thank you all very much. Have a wonderful break week, and we will see you all on Wednesday, February 17.

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