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Chair: Mr. Sean Casey

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.)): All right, we're in session and in public on committee business.

Mrs. Kusie.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): First of all, Chair, your statement about when we can anticipate getting the ministers in for... Is the clerk working on this? That's excellent.

The Chair: I've told you what I know. A motion was passed to invite three ministers to appear on supplementary estimates (B). The ministers have acknowledged receipt of the invitations, but we have not yet pinned down a date. Since then, the main estimates have dropped. That's where we are.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: That's excellent.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you.

The second item I wanted to go into was a return to Mr. Vis's motion. We had originally taken a break for five minutes to give it some consideration, and I was hoping that all committee members would have had an opportunity to review the motion at this point so we could discuss it further and determine as a committee if we're going to pursue Mr. Vis's motion or not. I didn't want that to fall by the wayside.

The Chair: I guess we can consider that motion to be back before the committee. We had moved to adjourn debate, so I take it you're asking that debate be resumed on that.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I guess I am, thank you.

The Chair: Do we have consensus?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We're now on Mr. Vis's motion.

This is the motion that was presented on Tuesday:

That, this committee undertake a study to review the first Spring 2019 report of the Auditor General of Canada on Call Centres and hear testimony from Employment and Social Development Canada officials on the action taken to provide Canadians with accessible and timely call centre services for Employment Insurance, the Canada Pension Plan, and Old Age Security; and that the committee report its findings, with recommendations, to the House and request that the government provide a comprehensive response.

Is there any debate?

Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Sorry, Mr. Chairman, it's not for debate.

[Translation]

When motions are made, they should also be in French, if possible. It is much easier for the francophone members.

The Chair: The notice of motion that Mr. Vis submitted is in both official languages. It reads as follows:

That, this committee undertake a study to review the first Spring 2019 report of the Auditor General of Canada on Call Centres and hear testimony from Employment and Social Development Canada officials on the action taken to provide Canadians with accessible and timely call centre services for Employment Insurance, the Canada Pension Plan, and Old Age Security; and that the committee report its findings, with recommendations, to the House and request that the government provide a comprehensive response.

I know that Ms. Chabot noticed an error. She is asking for the word "opportuns" to be replaced by "en temps opportun".

Ms. Chabot, do you have anything else?

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): No.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Louise Chabot: I do not know whether I have to proceed by amendment, but we are right to include "en temps opportun". It renders "timely call" better than the word "opportun" by itself.

Do I have to make an amendment, or do you want to change those words?

The Chair: We can proceed by consensus.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): I agree with that change.

The Chair: It is just a translation issue. We will make the change that Ms. Chabot is proposing.

Go ahead, Ms. Chabot.

• (1540)

Ms. Louise Chabot: I am in agreement on the substance of the motion, but I would like a clarification. The Auditor General's study focuses on Service Canada, and our work is about seeing whether those services are adequate and timely.

However, I would not want the motion used to put blame on the employees who work in those call centres. If that is not the objective of the motion, I will support it.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): I really like the motion.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Thank you for being so succinct, Mr. Albas. It's greatly appreciated.

Are there any other interventions?

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

The Chair: Mrs. Kusie.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: It has come to our attention as a Conservative team that we have received many calls and challenges to case work in our ridings relative to the Canada child benefit. I personally don't doubt its benefit and what it has done for Canadian families, but we are seeing problems with applicants' providing enough information or proof to be eligible for the benefit, as a result of different family makeups or of family challenges, in some cases making it seemingly difficult to qualify for the benefit.

I'm sure the government would love to see the intention of the benefit carried out, which is of course to allow more families to not only get out of poverty but also have a good quality of life.

With that said, I want to move the following motion for study: "That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the Canada Child Benefit, specifically single parents"—because, as I mentioned, it is among those applicants for the program that we were seeing the challenges. They seemed to us, in our assessment and that of our case workers, to be in need of the benefit, to qualify for the benefit, but to be having trouble meeting the qualifications as a result of difficulties of documentation that may or may not at times be due to unique or different family circumstances.

Pardon me. I should read the whole motion:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the Canada Child Benefit, specifically single parents accessing the Canada Child Benefit, and that the committee report on its findings, including recommendations, to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The motion is in order.

Mr. Albas.

● (1545)

Mr. Dan Albas: This issue continues to pop up in my riding. I wrote an MP report about it, and I've received telephone calls as well as emails from single parents. Largely, I must admit, these are women, but I have had a case in my riding, in Merritt, involving a father.

What typically seems to happen is that there will be a split-up of a relationship, but the spouse who leaves files their income taxes as if they were still living in the same home. CRA will then say, we're not going to give you this benefit, because we assume that you and your ex are still living together and that your income is thus much higher. Basically, you're guilty until you can be proven innocent.

I'll give a case of a teacher in my area who had to go to her principal to write a letter to state that she was no longer cohabiting with

her ex. This was very degrading to her. Another woman who contacted me was told by CRA that she would need to show that she was actually divorced from her husband. She went and got the paperwork and they still refused her.

This is an issue where people rely on those benefits, and we need to be mindful of who suffers the most when this happens. It's the children who are supposed to be getting the support of the Canada child benefit.

It would be a very beneficial study. I'm sure that if we decide to go forward with this, many people will be contacting their MPs, because this is a widespread problem. As I said, it's not just germane to British Columbia but right across the country.

I would hope that members would look at this as being a situation where, first of all, people who pay their taxes, file their taxes and work in good faith should receive the benefits they are owed under law; and second, if there are inequities brought in, in the way the benefit is given—or in this case, not given—we should be looking to see if the bureaucracy can offer better forms than making someone go to their employer to comment on something that is completely none of their business.

I would just ask members to look at that and to say emphatically that there are many people suffering and this is one way we can try to make the system better.

The Chair: Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): It's of course the intention of the government to make sure that this benefit flows to every single Canadian who is qualified to receive it. This is a challenge we face in terms of doing it through the Income Tax Act. We also have a huge challenge with the indigenous families on reserve. Additionally, we have challenges with same-sex couples.

I'm a little concerned with the description of having to go to an employer. There's a broad range of people you can go to and get letters from to verify your situation, everything from a community religious leader to police officers, lawyers and judges. It is always of concern when the bureaucracy fails to act in the way the legislation is written, but also the way the benefit has been rolled out.

We share your concerns on that. If there are ways to improve families' access to it, we of course would welcome a study on this. We think it's a very important study. The more people get the Canada child benefit, the more people we lift out of poverty. As you said, that impacts kids directly. We are completely in support of trying to make sure we're as effective as possible.

The one concern I would raise on top of this is that we have a bunch of motions that are lined up ready to be talked about, and before we start introducing new ones, we owe it to our members of the committee to resolve the existing ones. Maybe we can deal with those before we introduce new ones, try to get some of them refined and off to the committee, and then we can canvass members for new motions. That's the only caution on this one.

I'm happy to support it. It helps us deliver the benefit to those who need and deserve it.

The Chair: Mrs. Kusie, and then Madame Chabot.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Mr. Vaughan, for being open to studying this. We do feel that it is important.

I see from the motions still on notice that the government still has one motion. I certainly thought I provided a brief enough time for the individual to present their motion. If they still want to do this, which I believe they do, I would be happy to allow for time after for the committee member to do that.

Also, as you said, we have a number of studies that we have agreed as a committee are worthwhile. Still, we have yet to prioritize them as well. I personally would prefer to have too many studies, rather than not enough. I take your point, but as I said, we have the opportunity as a committee to prioritize them. Just because they're on the list, that doesn't mean we'll get around to them. We could list a hundred studies, and we clearly won't get around to them.

I would put that forward, and I certainly recognize all the motions from all members of the committee that are still on notice. I welcome any member of this committee to put forward their motion in the spirit that not only every party, but every individual would have the opportunity here to study what they feel to be either of greatest concern or of passion to them.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1550)

The Chair: Madame Chabot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: While I respect this new motion that has been introduced, let me explain how I go about my work on the committee.

I have no doubt that the motion comes from the calls from constituents who might be experiencing difficulties. I can say that, in my constituency, I receive many calls on immigration and many calls about the Phoenix system.

You can correct me if I am wrong, but it seems to me that we have a ten-week period to fill. I imagine that we will study the motions that seem to be the most critical, where a particular problem has been discovered that may have broader consequences.

So I wonder about this motion. Are we going to undertake a study for a few cases that could well find their answers elsewhere? Does that warrant the committee's attention?

I am not sure that it is a priority.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think this motion is worthy of a study. I am happy to support it.

We have the parliamentary secretary looking at this. After listening to the reasoning presented by the member opposite, I'm won-

dering whether there are any wording changes that would allow us to be more focused so as to find exactly what we are looking for.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I take your point, Mr. Dong.

Perhaps we could do an amendment such as "undertake a study on the Canada Child Benefit to determine barriers for access" or "to determine barriers for qualification". That's really at the heart of it.

Our intent is to evaluate the specific cases that, for example, Mr. Albas has brought up, in an effort to see what the barriers are and what the challenge is for these unique family situations to overcome in an effort to receive the benefit.

I'm suggesting the amendment before I propose the amendment. It would read, "undertake a study on the barriers to receiving the Canada Child Benefit" or something more specific to that.

The Chair: Mrs. Falk.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wonder whether the member has a suggestion or a type of path suggesting a change.

The one thing with this is that, because the CCB is relatively new still, just hearing what parents have to say of the barriers would be very educational for us. Then we would somewhat know what direction to take after we hear from witnesses.

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: If we want to narrow it down, perhaps we could say, "undertake a study on the Canada Child Benefit, specifically single parents who, despite being eligible, still have trouble accessing the benefit, and that the committee report on its findings, including recommendations, to the House."

We're just hitting a very specific targeted group. Quite honestly, if we can quickly bring in a few people who have been affected, ask officials for some clarification about the process and make some recommendations, I don't see this as being a long labour of love; however, I think it would be important to let people know that, if they qualify, they should not be denied because of some red tape.

• (1555)

The Chair: Ms. Young.

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): I think we would all agree that we don't want any Canadian child to be living in poverty. We know that the Canada child benefit has lifted many children in Canada out of poverty, but there are, of course, times when it might not work.

I take the concern of the opposition to heart, that we want to make sure that every child who needs it is getting it. In whatever way we can refine this, I think it would be a good—and short—study, and certainly I would be in favour of it.

The Chair: Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Just so that we're working from a basis of how effective enrolment has been, let me say that we're up to nearly 96% of full enrolment.

The gap tends to be on reserve, where it's only 80% of families, because of an inability to convince all to file income tax returns due to a long-standing perception that you don't need to file them. While you don't need to file them, that is the way to receive a child benefit. Even that number... When we took office, only 50% of families on reserve and in indigenous communities were receiving the benefit. We now have it up to 80% through a series of efforts to reach out to people, with indigenous partners and indigenous governments, to enrol.

The remaining 4% is of concern, of course, and it's not unique to single families. There is a whole series of reasons that we don't have the full enrolment.

I think this would be a quick study. I'm not sure how much personal experience we need, as much as we need the department looking for direction. It may be a question of expanding the list of people who can nominate you and verify your family situation and do it in a way that is sensitive to disclosure rules for families. I agree that sending it to an employer is not the best scenario, but there is a longer list that can be used.

I would suggest one small change. Instead of "specifically single parents", I would say "in particular single parents". That way it emphasizes the issue you've raised, but it doesn't limit it to single parents, because we know there are many two-parent and blended families who equally have this challenge. To make the rules accommodate the new, modern dynamics of families would be the best way to do it.

With that small change, I think we can support this and send it to committee for prioritization.

Mr. Dan Albas: Did you want to make a motion on that?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Yes, I will just make an amendment.

After the words "Canada Child Benefit," strike the word "specifically" and replace it with "in particular".

That just highlights the—

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: It honours the spirit. Thank you.

The Chair: Do we have consensus on the amendment? Can we consider it friendly, or do we need to...? Okay.

The motion has been amended to delete the word "specifically" that appears after the words "Canada Child Benefit," and replace it with the words "in particular".

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

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Chair, I would like to move a motion of which I previously served notice. It reads:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the financial challenges and barriers students face when pursuing a post-secondary education, improvements to the Canada Student Loans and Grants system that will reduce barriers to pursuing a post-secondary education, challenges graduates face when repaying their student loans, with a particular focus on new parents, a review of challenges jurisdictions face that do not participate in the Canada Student Loans Program and the impact this has on students in those jurisdictions; that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the Government table a comprehensive response to the report.

Notice of this motion was served prior to the last meeting. I believe members of this committee have had a chance to look at it.

In my previous life as a member of a provincial parliament, I was the parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for training, colleges and universities. I have seen the effects of the former new OSAP system helping hundreds of thousands of students to access secondary education, which is very important.

I think the government has a role to play at the federal level, with the Canada student loans. It's very important to prepare our future labour force with higher education to make them more competitive in today's world.

I move this motion and hope that committee members can support it.

• (1600)

The Chair: The motion is in order.

Mr. Vis.

Mr. Brad Vis: Thank you for tabling this motion, Mr. Dong.

I found it quite timely because, as I was looking at the recent supplementary estimates that were provided to our committee, one of the major items was the \$180 million of student loans listed by the Government of Canada that have not been repaid.

I think that relates to the challenges that some Canadians face when attending post-secondary education. They cannot pay, and are not paying, and taxpayers are on the hook for those discrepancies as well.

If the member would be open to hearing a little more about what the department has to say about the line item in supplementary estimates (B) and the \$180 million listed, I would be in support of this motion.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm not sure whether this is a discussion about a potential amendment to this motion, or whether, if we choose this study, this will be something we want to discuss when we do the study, to include government bureaucrats to talk to us about it.

The Chair: I may be able to help.

If the item is in the supplementary (B)s, as you've indicated, then we expect the ministers are going to accept an invitation to come to us to discuss the supplementary (B)s. That topic is entirely fair game in the course of those proceedings.

Is that helpful?

Mr. Brad Vis: Yes.

Mrs. Kusie, do you have any comments on that?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: No.

Mr. Brad Vis: If we're able to cover that in supplementary (B)s, I'm fine keeping the motion in its current form.

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: First of all, I want to thank the member for his contribution at the provincial level. I find it funny that we characterize it as "life"; I didn't think politicians had a life.

Obviously, some of these lines of questioning may come up when officials come. I think the goal here is to focus on how we make it so that Canadian families, especially those with student loan debts, can get ahead.

I'd be very supportive of this, and very supportive of Mr. Vis getting all the answers he needs.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mrs. Kusie.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: We do have a couple of remaining notices of motions. Since they are there, I'll put them forward one at a time.

I have nothing new to bring, as I did with the Canada child benefit today. To be clear, this isn't endless motions, Mr. Vaughan, although I'm sure it must feel like it. I try to be reasonable and empathetic.

My colleague Rosemary Falk unfortunately had to leave the meeting early. Mr. Barrett, it's good to see you here. Thanks for taking the time to join us.

• (1605)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): It's a pleasure.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I will move her motion then:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee study the Canada Summer Jobs Program to measure the program outcomes considering, but not limited to, the changes to the application process, uncertainty around program timelines, increased investments in the program and cuts to student work hours; that the committee reports its finding, including its recommendations, to the House and the government respond to the committee's recommendations.

I believe my colleague from the Bloc might have an amendment to this, which we welcome.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The motion is in order.

[*Translation*]

I gather that it has been circulated to you in both languages.

Go ahead, Ms. Chabot.

Ms. Louise Chabot: We have not rewritten the motion and our amendment is a simple one. It deletes the words "considering, but limited to, the changes to the application process, uncertainty

around program timelines, increased investments in the program and cuts to students work hours" and so reads as follows:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee study the Canada Summer Jobs Program to measure the program outcomes; that the committee reports its finding, including its recommendations, to the House and the government respond to the committee's recommendations.

We want to measure the results of the program, which could include other factors. In our view, the results, and the committee's study would be enough for us to see what must be kept. We have to determine whether the program is effective and what its results are. We do not have to review it in its entirety if it is not necessary to do so.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

We have an amendment to the original motion.

[*English*]

Is there debate on the amendment? We have an amendment to the motion before us, so the debate is now on the amendment.

Mrs. Kusie.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Fortunately, I had the opportunity to meet with Ms. Chabot and discuss the motion with her.

Ms. Falk and I agree with the motion that Ms. Chabot is proposing.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are we ready for the question? This is on the amendment to the motion.

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

The Chair: On the main motion as amended, are there any further interventions?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mrs. Kusie.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I will present the last motion we had on notice:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee study the First-Time Home Buyer Incentive to measure the program's outcomes, including but not limited to, usage of the program, the effectiveness of improving home ownership affordability and the impact on housing market prices; and that the committee reports its findings, including recommendations, to the House.

As I've always stated, Parliamentary Secretary Vaughan has much more knowledge and information regarding this, but as we have seen reported recently in the media, the uptake of the incentive has not been incredibly effective, nor has it seemed to serve the purpose of working with the stress test to allow for greater entry into home ownership for Canadians.

I am encouraged. I've heard mumblings of potential changes within budget 2020 to the first-time home buyer incentive.

This is a study that is dear to me, coming from a suburban riding where I am looking to see families purchase their first homes. As well, I think this program is an important part of moving individuals along the housing continuum, another idea that I believe the government supports. If I'm incorrect, please correct me.

For this reason, we have put this study forward, and I hope the committee will support this motion with the intention of looking for housing solutions across the continuum.

Thank you.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Kusie.

You have heard the motion. The motion appears to be in order. Are there any further interventions?

We have Mr. Turnbull, and then Mr. Dong.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): The first-time home buyer incentive is relatively new. I agree with the intent of the motion; I just wonder whether it's a bit too early to evaluate the full outcomes of this incentive program. I think we can all say we believe in it, but it can certainly benefit from evaluation in the future. I wonder whether we should wait another year, see how the uptake is this spring, when I think we will see a massive uptake, and then address the issues about a year from now.

The Chair: Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: My point is similar to Mr. Turnbull's. It's a relatively new program. I hear much in my riding in support of it, but I don't have a handle on whether, having seen it in action, people after their participation find that they have experienced difficulties or not. I haven't heard.

I wonder whether it's too soon to do this study. I just read the motion; it's a very worthy motion to look at, but I wonder whether its timing may be too soon.

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'm really happy to hear that government members are open to it. My understanding is that \$160 million was put in by industry and probably the same amount by the Government of Canada to start up the program.

Again, it's our job to make recommendations to the government on how it can improve it, and we can do that. I would point out that we could simply prioritize this accordingly.

I hope people wouldn't want to vote this motion down just because they didn't think the time was right. The time is right. Conversation will happen when we start prioritizing our work, after the indigenous housing study that we have already said was number one.

The Chair: Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: I agree that the timing is a critical issue here. The good news is that the numbers coming back as we move into the second half of the fiscal year are growing and getting stronger as the program becomes better known. We also anticipate

that there will be regional adjustments, which were committed to through the campaign process and were announced prior to the campaign, to start to fine-tune it, to make it work as effectively as it needs to in the markets where home ownership is more elusive.

This is also an opportunity, because I think one of the most important things we need to do in this term is take a look at the opportunity CMHC is starting to explore, which is the regionalization of the way we manage the Canadian housing market. Instead of trying to manage it through one-size-fits-all programs, which we know have disproportionate impacts on different parts of the country, this is the first time we have seen CMHC embrace a regional approach.

• (1615)

If we do the study, I would like to also extend it and take a look at how we can regionalize CMHC's approach. We know that such things as the stress test are really important in some markets, not so useful in other markets, and not even an issue in still other markets.

Trying to get CMHC, which is a Crown corporation, to embrace the regionalization of the housing market would be a fantastic thing, if all parties could agree to it, because I think it's the next step in making sure home ownership is much more attainable in this country.

The Chair: Mr. Barrett, welcome.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thanks very much for having me, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. It's a pleasure to be here.

On timing, I think making sure that we have a good benchmark is important. The program's one-year anniversary is in September of this year. I imagine, with the number of motions I have seen just in the few minutes I've been at this table, that your committee calendar will be quite full.

I think it's tremendously important. The different ridings represented at this table alone really tell a story about the need for looking at what the parliamentary secretary mentioned, and that's not having a one-size-fits-all approach.

Certainly, given the limits that apply to someone in the city of Toronto as compared with someone in my riding, Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, which is rural and in some parts quite rural, a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't align with home prices, but also with incomes.

It's a tremendously important study to have, but I think that engaging the Crown corporation, CMHC, on it would be very fruitful for Canadians.

The Chair: Are we ready for the question?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: [*Inaudible—Editor*] because I think it's—

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Yes, that's a great idea.

The Chair: Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: After “market prices;” we can add “and also study the possibility of regional approaches and regional impacts”. I think it would be good to see why CMHC is a bit stubborn on that at times, but also what the possibilities would be. If we can do it for EI, I’m sure we can do it for the housing market.

The Chair: We have an amendment to the motion. The debate is now on the amendment.

Ms. Young.

Ms. Kate Young: Could we have that read once again? Is it “and also study the possibility of regional approaches”?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Yes, and “regional impacts”.

Ms. Kate Young: Okay.

The Chair: Following the words “market prices;” the amendment would add “and also study regional approaches and regional impacts”.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: It’s “the possibility of regional approaches and regional impacts”.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Young, you had your hand up, and then Mr. Long.

Ms. Kate Young: No, I’m fine with what Adam said.

The Chair: Are we ready for the question? This is on the amendment to add the words “and also study the possibility of regional approaches and regional impacts”.

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

The Chair: Is there debate on the main motion?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Mrs. Kusie.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I have no more motions to present.

The Chair: Ms. Gazan.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Chair, I have a motion I would like to present.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I think I’m starting to get this.

I move that the committee ask the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Seniors to testify before the committee for one hour per minister to explain their mandate letters.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gazan.

The motion is in order.

[*Translation*]

I think she submitted it in both official languages.

[*English*]

Is there debate on the motion?

• (1620)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Chair, could I request that the vote be in public? Is that possible?

Is it public? Okay.

The Chair: Your request is granted, just like that.

Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: As parliamentary tradition would dictate, we of course support the ministers appearing in front of the committee. It’s an important and integral part of the accountability mechanisms of Parliament. Our challenge is that we have about 20 meetings before we rise for the summer. In splitting out the estimates, splitting out the one-hour meetings and splitting out the mandate letters—plus, officials usually follow on after ministers are here so that we can ask more detailed questions about issues that arise—my worry would be that we would take up all the time talking to ministers and no time in doing the studies and the work we need to process legislation and get our reports done.

I was wondering if it would be possible to have a typical process of doing this, which would be to combine the ministers’ mandate letters and the estimates—because they’re related—and have two at a time appear, with the staff to follow for the subsequent hour. Then we’d go to the next two at the next meeting and have the staff appear. We would get all four here. It’s hard to get four ministers to line up. Their schedules, even in a minority Parliament, are really tough, especially when we meet on Tuesday afternoons and that’s when cabinet is.

We can try to get it in such a way that we have two ministers with estimates and mandate letters, then follow that hour with the senior staff so we can drill down deeper into the departments, and then repeat that same format for the other two ministers. I’ll leave it to the committee to decide how we pair them, but that’s more likely to be driven by the ministers’ schedules than our capacity to tell them when to show up.

We of course support the ministers coming here for that exploration. We just think it’s more efficient to link them and to have staff follow up as well.

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: First of all, I always like the idea of ministers coming here, especially at the beginning of a mandate, so that we can understand where their priorities are. Obviously the Prime Minister has given them this set of priorities, and I think it’s always helpful to have them come in and to familiarize ourselves with those.

I do think, though, that having one minister, as has been suggested, is a good thing, because if you look at those mandate letters, first of all, you can see that there's a lot in them. I think we could very well spend an hour with the ministers in familiarizing ourselves with their style, what's in their mandate, where they feel they can make progress and how our committee can work into this, not only to provide oversight in terms of supply, but also in terms of some policy perspective.

I just had those few thoughts. I just don't want to have two ministers here at the same time and then try to ask questions, because there's severe overlap in some of these files.

The Chair: Ms. Young.

Ms. Kate Young: This question is more about how we will handle making sure that we can get the ministers here. When you're talking about four ministers, and if we do go for an hour per minister, how are we going to be able to start our reports, when we may have to wait a week or two for one minister and then a couple of weeks for another minister?

I would hate to see our motions and the reports we're going to be studying broken up. I think we've all been on committees where, once you start getting witnesses, you want to continue hearing them. I wouldn't want the ministers to be appearing willy-nilly.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Chabot, you have the floor.

Ms. Louise Chabot: I agree with meeting with the appropriate ministers in order to talk about their mandate letters. This is a new Parliament, so there are new mandates.

I agree with putting ministers together, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Employment, for example. Their mandate letters ask them to work together on certain issues. So it could be useful for those two ministers to come to meet with us together in order to talk about their mandate letters.

I am not opposed to the idea of adding the Minister of Finance to that session, although I do not know what that might mean. For me, the priority is to hear from the ministers on their mandate letters rather than to deal with matters of finance.

However, I agree with maximizing the number of ministers per meeting. We cannot have eight meetings on the subject, but I feel that is important to meet them.

• (1625)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Obviously, there seems to be some direction the committee is going in here, but I would just like us, perhaps, because some are senior ministers and some are junior ministers.... Quite honestly, I don't want to see two senior ministers coming in where there's a ton of.... But there are some complementary roles, as my friend from the Bloc has mentioned today; perhaps we should just work on which particular ministers. Is there an example we might want to use?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Do you mean for the ministers appearing?

Mr. Dan Albas: For example, I think Minister Qualtrough and Minister Tassi might be a good one, and maybe for the other section we'll have the two other ministers together. To me, those sound like logical choices, because they complement each other's mandates.

That was very persuasive, Madam.

The Chair: You can move an amendment to the motion that's on the floor.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: We move to request that ministers Qualtrough and Tassi, the ministers of.... I can't even remember the names of the ministries anymore; I can barely remember my own half the time. It is that ministers Qualtrough and Tassi appear together, that both estimates and mandate letters be discussed, and that staff be asked to follow on for the second hour, and then that ministers Hussen and Schulte, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the Minister of Seniors, form the second meeting, that they appear together for an hour, and that the staff follow on.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: He works with Minister Carla Qualtrough.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: The Minister of Labour is Ms. Tassi.

[*English*]

So it would be Minister Tassi and Minister Qualtrough together.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Yes.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Also, Mr. Hussen, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the Minister of Seniors will appear together. I'll take their pairing. Does that make sense?

The Chair: Can I take a crack at the wording? Someone else is going to have to move it.

I think what I've heard you say, Mr. Vaughan, is that you wish to amend the motion as follows: delete the words "for one hour per minister to explain their mandate letters" and replace them with the following: "and that the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion appear with the Minister of Labour to explain their mandate letters and main estimates, and that the Minister of Seniors and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development appear at a subsequent meeting to explain their mandate letters and main estimates."

I think that's what you were trying to say. I hope that's helpful.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: That's exactly what I was trying to say.

The Chair: I take that, then, as being moved by Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Before you move that, Mr. Chair, could you change the word “subsequent” to “different”? We don't know what order we're going to be able to line them up in.

The Chair: That's a fair comment.

Is there any further discussion on the amendment?

Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Again, just so I have complete clarity before I register my vote, Mr. Chair, are we talking about taking the mandate letter, which was a separate proposal put forward by the NDP, and merging it with the estimates? If we don't expand the time, we're actually now trying to cram more things into that one session, and I really have a challenge with that. You can't have a conversation in which everything is everywhere. It will not be as conducive as a good discussion on it would be.

Can we get some clarification on that? I think we're throwing in more things, and doing that will dilute the ability of Mr. Vis to ask the questions about the estimates that he wants to.

• (1630)

The Chair: Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: What would you suggest as a replacement for one hour—two hours?

Mr. Dan Albas: What was the original deal on the estimates? Were we going to do one hour? I don't have the motion in front of me.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Was it two hours for each meeting? We have two meetings in front of us, so put two hours for each meeting.

Mr. Dan Albas: It would be two hours for each meeting.

The Chair: We have Mr. Albas and then Mrs. Kusie.

Mr. Dan Albas: Again, to clarify, with the original motion that we as a committee passed to have them come in, was that for two hours for each minister to come in?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I don't think there was a time. There wasn't a time.

Mr. Dan Albas: What we're suggesting, then, is that we'll have two hours with two ministers so we can cover the mandate and the estimates. Okay. To me that seems a little more reasonable.

The Chair: Mrs. Kusie.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: As the individual who proposed the motion, I want to clarify that there was no time tied to it. We didn't discuss time, but I think we were thinking one hour per minister. I understand the challenges of ministers' schedules, but ultimately they are accountable to our committee, since they are guiding the direction of the committee and implementing the will of the committee. I'm just saying that I recognize their hectic schedules, but I think they have an obligation to be here for us. I think taking one hour out of their schedule is incredibly reasonable.

I'm a little concerned. An hour would have been enough for the estimates, but now, with the mandate letter and the estimates.... However, I guess in some ways they're one and the same in terms of priorities, potentially, and implementation of priorities, so I guess we'll have to use the one hour as we see fit.

However, the way the motion is presented, just in my opinion, is that additional time—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: It's two.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Okay, so we get two hours per minister. Then I'm fine with it.

I thought you were saying two ministers per hour or two for the....

Mr. Dan Albas: We'll have two ministers for two hours, and we can cover mandates and estimates. Bingo.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: You got it.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: So it's one hour per minister, though. That's what it is if it's two hours.

An hon. member: And there are also department officials for each minister who appears.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: I must admit, this motion seemed a little redundant to me if they're coming here already, with the exception that....

If it's one hour per minister, I'll be quiet and I'm all behind it. That's great. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: So the ministers will be in groups.

There will be two hours for the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, and two hours for the Minister of Seniors and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

During those two hours, we will talk about the mandate letters and we will discuss the supplementary estimates related to their mandates. That is how I understand it and I am in agreement.

[*English*]

The Chair: I think we have a consensus here, but we don't have a motion in front of us that reflects it.

Mr. Vaughan, I'm going to impose on you to either propose a subamendment or to withdraw your amendment and give us the wording that seems to capture the discussion.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: I'll withdraw my wording and use the wording that you used in place of it—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Including the two hours.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: —including the two hours.

Ms. Gazan read a motion, so just add the two-hour clause to it and we're good to go.

Sorry not to be....

• (1635)

The Chair: Now we're going to impose upon the clerk.

Go ahead.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael MacPherson): This is what I have: “That the committee ask the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, the Minister of Labour, and the Minister of Seniors to testify before the committee and that the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development appear with the Minister of Seniors on main estimates and mandate letters for two hours, and that the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities appear with the Minister of Labour at a different meeting on main estimates and mandate letters for two hours.”

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: That will be another two-hour meeting.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Vis.

Mr. Brad Vis: I'm concerned that if we do the main estimates, we won't discuss supplementary estimates (B) from the 2020 budget.

The Chair: Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I don't want to get into semantics. I don't know that the first sentence is needed. I think the simplest way to actually read the motion would be, “That the committee ask the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and the Minister of Labour to jointly appear before the committee for a period of two hours to discuss their mandate letters and the main estimates, and that in a separate meeting the committee invite the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the Minister of Seniors to testify before the committee for a period of two hours to explain their mandate letters and the main estimates.”

That way it's simpler. I leave it to you and the clerk to work that out, but I think it actually reflects what the committee said and it doesn't have extra sentences that are kind of confusing.

The Chair: Okay.

It's been pointed out to me by the analyst and Mr. Vis that there are a couple of things that are basically left hanging here.

Traditionally, when ministers appear on estimates, they appear for an hour and then departmental officials appear. The road that we're going down isn't consistent with that. I just want to point that out. If everyone is comfortable with taking an approach that isn't consistent with what's traditionally been done, then I'm your humble servant.

The other point that Mr. Vis raises, appropriately, is that we have adopted a motion to have three ministers appear on supplementary estimates (B). That isn't referenced in this motion. Presumably that will have to be dealt with.

Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): It's just a small technicality. The correct title for Minister Qualtrough is Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion”. I just wanted to make that correction.

The Chair: Okay. Can we take that as a friendly amendment? Okay.

Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: With the committee having made a decision on the supplementaries and now making a decision on the main estimates with a tag on, I think the two are quite different. I'm willing to support the motion as it currently reads. Again, I think it's helpful, particularly at the beginning of a mandate, to have them come in and explain their mandates. We can familiarize ourselves with them and what they're trying to do, and then talk about the main estimates.

I do think that this committee does need to assert itself, though, on its traditional roles. Any time supplementaries come forward, we should be inviting the minister to come to speak and we should look those over. I would just leave it at that.

The Chair: Are there any further interventions?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Am I to understand, then, that the ministers are now being asked to appear twice?

The Chair: We have adopted a motion to invite three of them to come on supplementaries. We're now considering a motion to invite four of them to come on mains and mandate letters.

• (1640)

Mr. Adam Vaughan: First of all, that eats up just about the entire time to do studies. That concerns me, particularly insofar as we have a study that we've already prioritized.

Second, I'm not sure that you're going to be able to get ministers to put that much time between now and June into appearing in front of committees. I'm trying to figure out a way to manage it so that we get access to ministers. Having an hour, one at a time, on the supplementaries, and then another two hours to follow, are three hours of ministers' time. I just don't think we have the bandwidth to handle that.

Is there a way of consolidating the supplementaries and the main estimates, as well as the mandate letters, into that two-hour meeting? I think that's the efficient way to get it done.

I'd be surprised if there's an hour's worth of questions on mandate letters. They're not that complex, and they are interrelated. The mandate letters, the estimates and the supplementaries are all part of the same body of work. One is just language, and the other one has the numbers to support that language.

In the name of efficiency and getting to work, rather than having ministers endlessly appear in front of the committee, let's compress the work, focus the work and get the work done.

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I want to agree with my colleague Mr. Vaughan. I think we have a lot of work cut out for ourselves based on all the really impressive motions we've put forward. It seems that it will delay things considerably if we have ministers coming in meeting after meeting. I really believe in efficiency. There's a lot of work to get down to business on.

The other thing is that the mandate letters are online. It's always nice to hear from ministers about their mandates, certainly, but they are online. I've printed them all out and read them. We can all review them. What is it that we really need to hear from ministers regarding their mandates that we can't already access and do our homework on?

The Chair: Ms. Gazan.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think it provides us with an opportunity to ask questions of the ministers about their mandates and how they plan on fulfilling their mandates, but I also think that it is a reasonable suggestion from the members to combine the two meetings together for two hours.

Although the mandates are online, I do think that having an opportunity to ask the ministers questions about those mandates and how they expect to fulfill them is really important.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Chabot, you have the floor.

Ms. Louise Chabot: I think we all agree on the basics. We can read the mandate letters, but it is important to see the ministers, to confirm how they intend to carry out the mandate with which they have entrusted, and to ask questions about their priorities. In addition, if some mandates overlap, we can see how they intend to work together. Those are important questions.

You mentioned the supplementary estimates as they relate to the mandates, and the main estimates. As for the scheduling, I don't know whether it would be possible to have two meetings lasting three hours instead of two. Then it would be over and done with.

Would three hours be enough to meet the two ministers and cover the mandate letters and the supplementary estimates?

We have agreed that lunch can be ordered. If that is so, we can extend the meeting and get everything done.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Long.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I think we need to step back, though, and recognize it. I just counted up nine weeks, so I think we have 18 meetings. We all know that there are going to be votes and there are going to be things that happen, so I think it's prudent that we combine all of these. I don't think we need to talk endlessly to ministers. We'll get the two ministers in for two hours, and in the next meeting we can do that again. I think that's more than enough time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Vis.

Mr. Brad Vis: I'd just like to point out, with all due respect, Mr. Vaughan, that when we talk about the efficiency of the committee, our constitutional responsibility is to approve or disapprove parliamentary expenditures.

I do appreciate all the work that every committee member wants to undertake for the well-being of their constituents, but my constituents also want me to undertake the work of reviewing expenditures put forward by the government, and I don't want to undermine the estimates process. There are literally hundreds of people employed full time by the Government of Canada who prepare these reports, and we're discussing one hour for someone's full-time job in the department. I don't want to undermine the process more than it already is in our Parliament.

Thank you.

• (1645)

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: I think it's really important. There are a lot of new members here, and again, especially, this is a minority Parliament and Canadians have asked us to work together. That's right, but we also have to be mindful that the supplementaries as well as the main estimates are sent to this committee for our scrutiny and review.

It's one of those things where we have.... Again, I think Mr. Vis alluded to this. It is 100% our ancient duty to either deny supply or to grant it, so there has to be an oversight component of that. I do think that this is the.... We already passed a motion the last day, and I would hope that members would acknowledge that.

We've already seen the NDP motion changed quite dramatically to take into consideration ministers' very valuable time. I also will say, though, that there is nothing more important, I believe, than for ministers to be held accountable. That's why I believe that this first part is our role. It's to have those ministers in front of us so we can ask questions. If they answer all those questions and I've exhausted everything, I'll be the first person to say, "Minister, thank you for your time and please go and do the good work you need to do."

I would hope that the government—and I'm looking at the parliamentary secretaries who are here—fully understands that a committee's first assignment is to do that and to ask for those things. I'm sure there are many things that a minister could be doing, but there's no greater work. How many hundreds of thousands of Canadians are represented in this room? I think there's no greater duty than that first one.

The Chair: We have Mr. Housefather and then Ms. Young.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate what Mr. Albas just said. I agree that one of the priorities for ministers should be to attend committee when committees want the ministers, and I believe that our ministers are committed to doing that.

I was going to make a suggestion. Again, I bow to the will of the committee, and I know our ministers are going to make themselves as available as they can. I think it's reasonable to talk about the mains and supplementaries and the mandate letter. In terms of what you said about expanding Ms. Gazan's motion, remember that in her motion we talked about each minister being there for an hour, and now we're talking about them being there for two hours. As committee members who are more experienced on committees know, you can ask questions of whomever you want, and over two hours you can get an awful lot of questions in.

What I would perhaps suggest, just in terms of not worrying about anything else, is this. What if the motion were to be amended to add the words "and supplementaries" where it says that they would come in to discuss the mandate letter and the mains, and then it would say, "for a period of no less than two hours". Then it's up to the chair and the committee to decide how many rounds of questions they want to go for. Perhaps you can cover it all in one session instead of trying to bring the minister back multiple times, which I think is much more inconvenient than the minister staying for one additional round of questions if the committee has another round of questions at the end of the meeting. That's just my thought.

The Chair: Ms. Young.

Ms. Kate Young: Well, that brings up another thought, but I wanted to say that I think it's important, as MP Albas mentioned, that we hear from the ministers. There's no question that we have a lot to ask. There are many things to go over. I just wanted to put forward that I was ready to vote on the motion, and I think we should just go ahead.

The Chair: Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: I just want to be clear, because I respect the principle that was spoken to. Having been a member of the opposition, I am worried that getting a minister in here is not the easiest thing in the world to do. If we have only one shot at the minister, we should have all of the issues available to ask about, and that's what I was trying to do. I'm trying to find a way to be efficient, given the fact that if we got one visit between now and summer, that would probably be pretty good. I don't want to cut out the main estimates or the supplementaries or the mandate letter. I want to find a way to include all of them together so we can ask the full range of questions.

I'm not going to stand in the way of the principle, which I think you've spoken to so eloquently. I think we can find a way to do it with the two hours. We should let the second motion we passed stand and hope we can get the ministers in here twice, but my guess is that we'll get them in here only once.

• (1650)

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: I sincerely appreciate that obviously the other side understands where we're coming from on this, so I say thank you for listening. That's a really great sign today.

I would just be mindful, though, that through our humble servant the chair we can summon a minister, and when we make an ask, we are asking for them to book it with the chair at the earliest convenience, with the understanding that they do have important roles.

If any of the ministers believes that they can evade some of the questions that Mr. Vis has, and the opposition parties are convinced that it's in the public interest—

Mr. Brad Vis: —and the Liberals are—

Mr. Dan Albas: Well, I'm just saying that I can count on you rallying at least this side, Brad.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dan Albas: We could summon them, if necessary. I think it's out of respect for their work that right now it's just a request.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: That's why we want to have the full range of questions available. That's what we're trying to do here.

The Chair: Okay, so we are on the amendment.

No? Sorry.

The Clerk: It's the condensed, abridged version, Mr. Housefather's.

An hon. member: Can you read it out again?

The Chair: No.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: With the greatest respect, Mr. Housefather has put forward a very constructive solution, but Mr. Housefather is not a member of the committee and can't move motions, so if somebody wants to adopt his words, perhaps to withdraw the first amendment or to make a subamendment, that's up to them.

Sorry, Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: That's totally fair.

The Chair: Ms. Young.

Ms. Kate Young: I just want to move the amended version of the motion.

I want to make sure we're all aware of what we're voting on. I hate to ask you to repeat it, but could we...? It was just the preamble. I think it was to take the first sentence off, so you're talking about the different ministers and their titles only once.

The Chair: Okay. Here's where we are.

The original motion moved by Ms. Gazan was that we ask the four ministers to testify before the committee for one hour per minister to explain their mandate letters. That was the original motion.

Mr. Vaughan proposed an amendment that said that two of the ministers would come in for one meeting, and the other two would come in for another meeting, to speak to main estimates and their mandate letters for two hours. That's a summary of the amendment.

Mr. Housefather indicated that the amended motion is now a bit redundant, because in the first half of the original motion we talk about inviting ministers, and in the second half we say it again.

I guess what we're going to do now is to adopt a subamendment. It's really a second amendment.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Why don't I just withdraw mine and we can go with Anthony's? That would accomplish what we want.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Dan Albas: So we withdraw the first amendment and take the second one.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Just leave it as is. It doesn't have to be elegant.

Mr. Dan Albas: I totally agree.

The Chair: Madame Chabot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: The first part is no longer needed. The new format for the meeting includes the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, and the Minister of Labour, with their mandate letters and the estimates. If we add the main estimates, will two hours be enough?

• (1655)

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Louise Chabot: We are adding the budget and taking out the first part.

[*English*]

The Chair: The clerk has suggested to me a way out of this—namely, that a further amendment be moved that deletes all of the words after “that” and adopts Mr. Housefather's wording, followed by Mr. Vaughan's wording.

A voice: No.

The Chair: That's not what the clerk suggested. That's what I thought I heard.

Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Rather than eating ourselves up here, can we not just vote on Mr. Vaughan's amendment and clear that, so that we're there? Then, if someone else wants to move further, that will make it easier.

The Chair: Yes. Okay.

We have an amendment to the motion, proposed by Mr. Vaughan, which is in order. That amendment is to delete the words “for one hour per minister to explain their mandate letters” and to replace them with these: “and the Minister of Family, Children and Social Development appear with the Minister of Seniors on main estimates and mandate letters for two hours, and that the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities....”

“Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities” is not the right term.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: It's “Disability Inclusion”.

The Chair: Okay...“and Disability Inclusion appear with the Minister of Labour at a different meeting on main estimates and mandate letters for two hours.” That is the amendment to the motion.

Is there further debate on the amendment?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: No. Please, no.

The Chair: We'll vote on the amendment.

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

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I would like to make an amendment and call it the “Housefather clause”.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dan Albas: Can you catch my drift?

The Chair: Excellent timing and intervention.

Go ahead, Mr. Housefather. Help us through the wording of the Housefather clause.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chair, we've adopted something that I think should just be adopted at this point. I don't think we need to do anything more.

Mr. Dan Albas: That's perfect.

The Chair: The clerk has suggested an elegant way out of this. Given what Mr. Housefather just said and what the clerk has whispered in my ear, I suggest that we now proceed to debate and vote on the main motion, and that your chair would accept a motion to instruct us to make whatever grammatical or non-substantive changes to the motion are necessary to clarify its intent. Then I think we'll get there.

Is there any debate on the main motion as amended?

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

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, if you find this in order, I will make the motion that in regard to the previous motion, you and the clerk be allowed to make any clerical or grammatical changes that do not materially affect the motion itself.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas.

Is there any discussion on that?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thanks for getting us through that.

Is there any further business?

Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: I talked to Mrs. Falk before she left, and I would like to move that the second study be Mrs. Falk's seniors study on the issue of grandparents. I think it's a really important issue. I would like to move that it be the second study of this committee so that we can move forward on that.

We'll leave it to the subcommittee to figure out scheduling, timetables of the number of meetings, and all that stuff later. I just think it's an important meeting. I would hope that it would have the support of the opposition. It's their motion.

• (1700)

The Chair: Is there any discussion on the motion that the second study to be performed by the committee be the one proposed by Mrs. Falk with respect to grandparents?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Grandparents and care of grandchildren....

The Chair: Are you ready for the question?

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

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: I hope this motion is in order: That we can now adjourn.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Adam Vaughan: With the disclaimer that if there is any grammatical error....

The Chair: We're adjourned.

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