



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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# Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

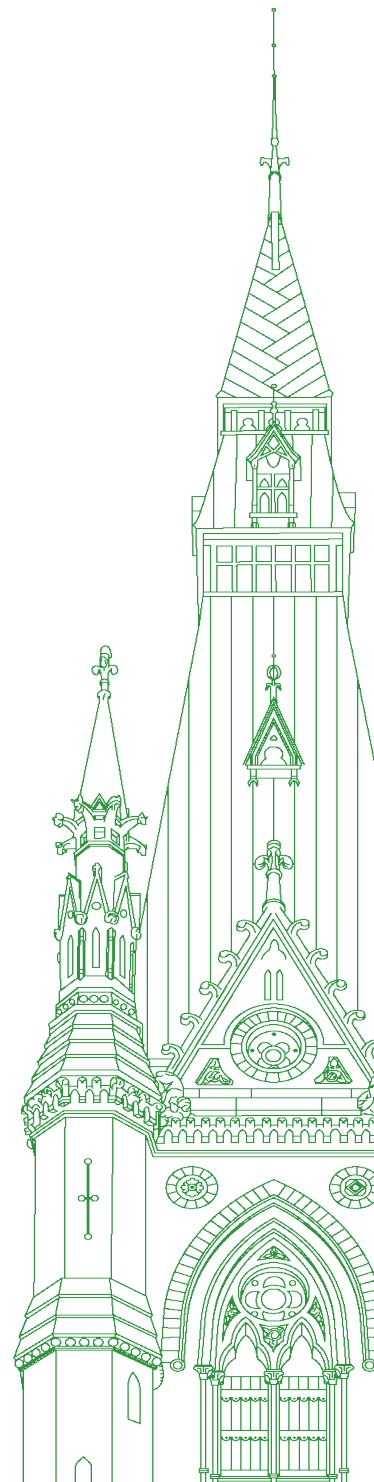
EVIDENCE

NUMBER 003

**PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT**

Thursday, July 9, 2020

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Chair: Mr. Peter Fonseca





## Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Thursday, July 9, 2020

• (1505)

[*English*]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Erica Pereira):** Honourable members of the committee, I see that we have a quorum.

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

[*Translation*]

We can now proceed with 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 position of chair.

Yes, Mrs. McCrimmon.

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** I would like to nominate Peter Fonseca.

**Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC):** I'll second that.

**The Clerk:** Okay. It has been moved by Mrs. McCrimmon that Mr. Fonseca be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

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

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

I declare the motion carried and Mr. Fonseca duly elected chair of the subcommittee.

[*English*]

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.)):** Thank you very much, everybody. It is an honour, and I thank you for your support to allow me to assume this position.

Being new to this committee but knowing much about the committee and having sat on the committee a number of times when being subbed in, in previous years, what I've seen is that this committee is special. I say that in a very heartfelt way, because the way this committee works through collaboration, through consensus is a cul-

ture that we would like to see in all committees. As I said, this one works in a very special way for the Hill. Taking on this role, I would like to continue in that vein and to really hear from all of you in terms of all the experience that you have. I know we're talking about very important subject matter in terms of world issues that are taking place, one that we want to get to right now and that's very urgent and important.

I can't thank you enough for your support, and I look to really hear from you in terms of how we move forward. I know you're going to have some amazing questions for all the witnesses we're going to have as we get into the different studies, and the study that we're looking to do at this time.

I'm going to ask committee members whether they would like me to address them by Mr. or Ms. and last name, or by first name. Let's see a show of hands for first name. Okay.

Garnett.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Peter, and congratulations.

My understanding is that there's been discussion among the parties and there's likely some consensus on moving forward with a study as soon as possible on the situation of Uighur Muslims in China. I suggest that maybe we just dive right into the discussion of programming that study, if there's consensus around proceeding.

My understanding from some of the discussions that took place was that there was a sense that not next week but the following week would be a good time to target for. It gives us enough time to make sure witnesses are scheduled and available. I might suggest we identify two or three days that week to have some pretty detailed and intensive hearings, if we want to proceed in that fashion.

We can have a little bit of a general discussion about witnesses here and then submit specific names to the clerk by a certain point, allowing for that scheduling to take place. Hopefully, there's interest in moving in that direction.

**The Chair:** Yes, that's my understanding, but I'm looking...

Yes, Iqra.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

First of all, congratulations. I think this is one of the most, as you said, special committees that I've ever been on. Just having the honour of working on these very important issues has meant a lot to me and to our communities here in Canada. I've had a wonderful conversation with David on this very specific issue, not just today but in the past as well. As you may know, Chair, we delved deep into this very dire issue, as it's being presented—I believe it was last year—and I really appreciate that David has raised this issue again. I know he has been raising it for the past number of years.

I would really be glad to have this study. I would only ask for a number of things, if that's okay.

We are a consensus-based committee, which means that a lot of the politics that go into our positions should be kept out of what we discuss. It really is a dire human rights issue, and we've had a wonderful way of working in the past number of years. I really hope that, with all of the new members here today, it continues that way. I think it's a wonderful way to really lead by example and say that human rights matter and that they are paramount to a lot of the other issues that we may or may not be concerned with.

Garnett mentioned witnesses. One thing that came up the last time we delved into this issue was the safety and security of witnesses. I would appreciate it if any discussions about witnesses happened in camera, as the safety and security of any of the witnesses whom we may or may not end up hearing from should be maintained.

Those are my thoughts as we go into this study.

• (1510)

**The Chair:** Thanks, Iqra.

It's over to David, the dean of this committee.

**Mr. David Sweet:** That just means I have more responsibility.

Thank you, Chair, and congratulations. I'm very happy that you're our new chair. I have seen you work. You're a man of principle and character, and I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. David Sweet:** I'd also like to thank all of my colleagues. You all responded in the most positive way when Garnett and I approached you after the article in *The Associated Press*, which was very damning. We knew from previous studies, and we've had multiple.... In fact, one of the things that I'd ask, Chair, through you to our researchers, particularly for the newer members.... I believe we've done at least two other full studies and a number of statements over the past 10 years. Could we maybe have the links to those sent to all the members?

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. David Sweet:** We have two substantial opportunities here. The first, and by far the most important, is to do some good by raising this issue and having significant international pressure, now that we have this new evidence. We're really the only committee.... When we travelled to Washington, we found out that the Tom Lantos commission, which we thought was our senior, doesn't actually do studies. In fact, we had a kind of agreement—I think we have to

go back and refresh that—that they would sometimes use us because they really just get evidence and make statements publicly.

We have an opportunity to do the unilateral work of a professional group to really make this issue known through the capability that we have of calling multiple witnesses. Obviously, there are lots of people who are experts and are speaking out individually, but our strength is having the capability to get a balance of witnesses from the Uighur community, from academia and former diplomats. I think if we round it out well like that, we'll be able to get a very accurate picture, not only of today's present circumstance but of how it's grown and the likelihood—and this is why I think it's very important for us to act for them right now—of it getting worse if we're not very substantive in our findings and our report.

Thank you for the opportunity, again. Thank you to all of my colleagues. I greatly appreciate all the co-operation that we've had.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your advocacy.

Yes, Iqra.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Thank you.

I just wonder, to David's point, given that so much has been done on this.... I know that in the last Parliament we had a very detailed, substantial report with some very heart-wrenching testimony. I'm wondering if we could perhaps include what we heard there and then build upon that as part of the study, instead of starting from scratch.

I wonder what the thoughts of my colleagues are on this.

**The Chair:** This is a suggestion. Why don't we go in camera so that we can have this discussion? Names may come up, people may come up, etc., as some of the witnesses. I don't know how others feel about this.

Garnett.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Not that we shouldn't ever do in camera, but the difficulty we have right now with in camera is that there are some specific limitations around staff being present in this room who are following online. If we go in camera, we're not supported in the same way that we normally are. I would say let's discuss as much as we can in public.

• (1515)

We don't have to get into witness names, but I do have many suggestions for witnesses who are already on the record by name and have given interviews. I'm happy to have some discussion in camera as well.

We should probably have a bit of a discussion about dates, times, number of hearings, some of the logistics around that, and maybe some process around witnesses. If we want to talk about some of the witnesses, we can reserve some time at the end for in camera.

**The Chair:** I just want to heed the concerns of safety and security, and everything else, so that we can have an open discussion. But I agree that we can move on to some of the logistics.

I think we're talking about the week of the 20th.

**Mr. David Sweet:** I'd like to mention one thing, Mr. Chair, if people are fine with that. Karen does not have that concern, but I know that most others do. Rather than come back week after week, where we normally have our one-hour meeting, which would be laborious, perhaps we could have several panels next week, maybe two days of three panels, or whatever number we can agree on, so that we can actually.... Of course, we would need some direction from the clerk on that. Obviously, the translators would need to sub in and out, so we'd have to have some spacing in that regard. If we were to do it that way, people wouldn't have to travel multiple times from their constituency. I know that Heather's and Garnett's are a little ways away.

We could accomplish something that's important enough. I mentioned this in my letter to you and all of my colleagues. The thing is to get this study actually done. Hopefully, when we get back in September, the foreign affairs committee can take it up and then make it an official study. We can't do anything on our own; they have to approve it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Just before Garnett, maybe the clerk could give us some insight into the logistics of the week of the 20th: resources, room availability, etc. What David was talking about was two days and a number of meetings. Is that possible?

**The Clerk:** Sure. Currently, there are two rooms set up for in-person meetings, this room and room 415 in this building. It shouldn't be a problem to have longer meetings, but we will need to be cognizant of the interpreters. Usually, when they do their switch, it takes about half an hour to have the cleaning done properly for the next group of interpreters. But that's fine. I'm happy to arrange the panels in such a way as to have a natural pause in the meeting while the cleaning happens.

**The Chair:** Does it matter if it's Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday? Is the whole week of the 20th open, or any of those days?

**The Clerk:** I would have to double-check. I'm sure that if the subcommittee would like to make a decision on the days, we could work around that decision.

**The Chair:** I think we should look for flexibility so that you are able to set it up. We want to go that week.

We have Garnett, and then Heather, please.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** On the logistics, I happen to know that the public safety committee study on systemic racism is on Thursday and Friday. If we were to do intensive hearings Monday through Wednesday, or two of those days, then the clerk could look into availability. As far as I know, the public safety committee is meeting those days. I don't know of any other committees that are meeting, so we will probably find availability.

On the product, I think it would be worthwhile for us to try to do that intensive study and then be ready to have some product coming

out very shortly afterwards, a report through the foreign affairs committee.

The other thing we can do—and I think this committee has done this in the past—is send a letter to the minister, reporting some of our findings to the minister directly. That does not require a delay, and it ensures that the minister, and through him the government, is absorbing the work that is done at the committee and hearing our recommendations, if we want to include some recommendations in that letter. That does show the benefit, I think, of that earlier timeline and being able to feed into the government's thinking on this as quickly as possible.

**The Chair:** I have a question for the clerk. Do all reports, then, go to the foreign affairs committee, the parent committee? Okay.

Heather.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** I just wanted to clarify. Have we had a discussion that this is the best week to do it? It does seem that we can't have it tabled until September. From my own perspective, and it's selfish, I have to be here for House duty for the August 12 meeting. If it's something that's decided and everybody is happy with that week, that's fine, but it does mean another trip on an airplane, which of course is a little perilous at this time. I just didn't know if we'd had a fulsome discussion, or if there's a reason why we need to have it that week instead of two weeks later.

• (1520)

**The Chair:** Yes, if we were to put a report together, we would need some time for the translation and for getting everything set. If we come in August, that may not give us enough time. If we do it in the week of the 20th, I understand that's when all the resources are here on the Hill because that's one of the times when we're back.

We have Alexis up next.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** First, I want to congratulate you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I think that we should meet during the week of July 20, primarily because the situation is urgent. People are currently in re-education camps. I think that we must act as quickly as possible. I believe that together we can find witnesses. The clerk can help us organize this.

Also, as you were saying, in order for the report to be ready in September, we need to start as soon as possible.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Yes, Iqra.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Thanks, Chair.

I take all the points. I agree with Alexis. I think there is a bit of an urgency to getting this done. I would propose that in the week we're discussing, the week of July 20, we do two meetings of three panels and get it out.

In terms of the final product, I know that in the past, especially with the Rohingya—and David will remember this—even though we did an initial fulsome report and study, we later revisited the issue and did statements from the committee itself as press releases, etc., which we sent to various organizations across the world.

I think that could be an avenue we can pursue this time around, instead of trying to nitpick a 50- or 60-page report. We know this is a legitimate issue; we know this has a time crunch on it. Instead of putting together a full report with the details that we've already explored in the past, we can condense it down to a one- or two-page statement that we make as a committee, and lead with that, building on the work we've done in the past.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Garnett.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Sorry, I'm talking a lot here, but it's kind of normal for me.

To Heather's point, first of all, my understanding of the rules around video conferencing is that a committee is not able to meet exclusively by video conference without the express authorization of the House. However, there's nothing to prevent a committee from allowing members of that committee to pose questions by video conference. As long as there weren't motions moved or things like that, and as long as we met the quorum requirements, there would be no reason why a member couldn't participate in the hearing portion remotely. However, if we were having discussions on reports and statements, I think it would be necessary for members to be here, especially if we were doing that in camera.

That timeline might end up working very well for you if we do hearings the week you're not planning on being here and we're able to facilitate your joining virtually. If you're going to be here later on, during that sitting, that's when we would consider the report, statement, letter or whatever the case may be.

To Iqra's point, I think it's a great point about the value of having a letter or statement that's brief and to the point and that contains some things that are specific and concrete. I'm hopeful that we'll be able to find a consensus on some recommendations for Canadian action in response to this and identify the situation. As well, again hopefully working on a consensus basis, we can say what steps we should take. I don't think that precludes a more detailed report as well. We could start with a letter or a statement and then also have a report that does the detailed work. A report would not be able to proceed through the channels of being tabled and so forth until October, likely, but we could proceed with the statement as soon as possible.

In terms of scheduling, as we do this I think we should.... There are a lot of experts we could hear from. There's first-person testimony. We need to hear about action. I would favour us having six to eight two-hour meetings over the course of those two days to really hear from that range of experts. We're talking six hours of hearings a day for two days. That's very little compared with the

amount of time the finance committee or other committees put in at certain points in time. I think having that length of time and that breadth of evidence would serve us well in terms of coming to some concrete, substantive conclusions.

• (1525)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

My understanding from the clerk on participating through video is that it would not be part of quorum. It would first have to be approved by the whips' offices, and then you would not be able to vote in a situation like that, from afar. I guess that's what you would have to weigh there.

Sameer, welcome.

David, you're up next.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Chair, as always, I appreciate Iqra's line. I think Garnett said it best—that we have both.

I want to read out the United Nations definition of genocide:

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Literally all of these have been fulfilled in the case of the Muslim Uighurs.

I think we need a more detailed study. It doesn't have to be 60 pages. In fact, we could condense the first two or three pages and just highlight some of the things we've said before. It needs to be substantive, only because of the nature of the issue. I think we have to demonstrate that we did our job thoroughly. The gravity of this issue requires very succinct legal detail and very succinct recommendations in regard to this, which is a crime against humanity.

**The Chair:** Thanks, David.

To the analyst, how much time would you need if you were looking at two days with a number of hours of witnesses?

**Mr. Brendan Naef (Committee Researcher):** The week of July 20 works well. If it's a matter of having several meetings together, we could possibly provide a larger background document and then smaller documents with just the bio and questions, perhaps, instead of a different briefing note, obviously, for each one.

It's tight, but for the beginning of the 20th, it's doable.

**Mr. David Sweet:** I love doable.

**The Chair:** Is there any more discussion?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Maybe I would just make a concrete proposal, then, one that seems to accord with what everybody else is saying.



In order to have time in between for transition and that, let's say we schedule ourselves for hearings into two-hour blocks on the Tuesday and Wednesday, to give ourselves an extra day. We can aim for three two-hour blocks per day on the Tuesday and Wednesday.

We can have a subsequent discussion about witnesses, if there's agreement to proceed on that basis, but on the Tuesday and Wednesday we'd have three two-hour blocks each day and schedule different witnesses into each of those blocks.

That would seem to me to be in line with the discussion and it makes the most sense.

• (1530)

**The Chair:** We have Heather, and then Iqra.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Would it make sense for us to have it on the Tuesday and Thursday? The only reason I say that is so that we could participate in the House sitting on Wednesday.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** If I could respond, I would suggest the Monday and Tuesday then, because the Thursday and Friday are the systemic racism hearings of public safety.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Oh, okay.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I just thought that in the event that there's a limited number of people, or parties want to have the same people at both hearings, or there's a limited supply of committee rooms, we would avoid the days on which those things were happening.

**The Chair:** Iqra.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Thanks, Chair.

My understanding is that the House is sitting on the Wednesday. Might I propose perhaps Monday and Tuesday for the timing, given that some of us may want to take part in what happens in the House proceedings on that Wednesday?

You know, I don't want the previous testimony, which we have already heard and compiled, to go to waste. I feel we should be relying on that. I feel we should be building upon that instead of starting from scratch and hearing from the same witnesses all over again.

I think perhaps with two days of condensed meetings, with maybe three panels on each of those days—six multiplied by two gives 12 witnesses, perhaps, over those two days—that would be quite sufficient for us to come up with a very substantial statement to begin with, and then perhaps a more detailed substantial report when the House resumes in September or October.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. David Sweet:** I think if we have a two-hour meeting with a three-person panel.... Normally, we don't go over two, because we generally have only 45 minutes, but if we have two hours.... I think three to four people is what the other standing committees usually do. Then we'll have enough time for them to all have opening statements and for us to have equal time for questioning.

That should be good for us to get enough experts in. I know there are plenty of people who want to weigh in.

**The Chair:** I saw some hands go up.

We have Alexis, and then Heather.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I tend to agree with the Monday and Tuesday schedule. I'm fine with the six-hour sessions each day.

However, in terms of the number of witnesses per meeting, I want us to stick to three witnesses. If we invite more witnesses, we may not be able to ask certain questions in two and a half minutes, unless we decide to request that the witnesses give shorter presentations. That way, everyone would have time to ask their questions.

I would suggest to the subcommittee that we invite a maximum of three witnesses. If we decide to invite more witnesses, I would suggest that their presentations be shorter.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Heather.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Everything that Alexis said...all of those things.

As well, from my understanding as a new committee member, I would go to my whip and have my whip communicate with the other whips so that I would be able to join virtually. Would we be able to agree, then, not to bring forward things that need to be voted on for that day and to hold those until a later date? Is that something we can agree on as a committee?

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** We don't vote on this committee. This is a consensus-based committee. To my knowledge, in these past five years we've never voted on anything.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Let's not make the 22nd the first time.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** If we don't agree on something, we generally tend not to do it, so I don't think voting would be an issue at all.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I've already talked to the whips, then.

**Mr. David Sweet:** To Alexis' point, depending on the number of witnesses.... If we need to go to four, I think we would all be in agreement that we can limit them to six minutes rather than 10 minutes for opening remarks, to make sure that we have enough time for questioning. Generally speaking, they're strong enough in their opening remarks that they can usually conclude by saying that we can ask them about this or that, and they'll have some clear points to make. That can direct us.

As I said, I've seen some of the names already, and there are some very good people, from a broad spectrum of the community, whom we really want to get on record.

• (1535)

**The Chair:** I'm seeing heads nod. Is there consensus on the six minutes, if we have four witnesses? Yes.

Alexis.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Our meetings will be similar to the meetings of standing committees such as the Standing Committee on Finance or the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Therefore, in terms of the time given to each person, shouldn't we draw on the current approach in these committees rather than on the approach proposed here?

At this time, instead of giving each member the usual five minutes and two and a half minutes, we're giving them seven minutes and then moving on to five minutes. Since we'll be sitting in the same manner as the standing committees, shouldn't we use their procedures for speaking time?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We'd have to find consensus to change that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Personally, I would rely on the existing approach. For example, in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, which oversees our subcommittee, six minutes are provided in the first round. In the second round, the Conservatives and the Liberals have five minutes, and the NDP and the Bloc Québécois have two and a half minutes.

If everyone agrees, I would propose that we use this approach as a reference.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I know you're up next, Iqra, but to the members who have sat on this committee for many years, why did you adopt that?

**Mr. David Sweet:** Because of the spirit of this committee, we've always approached it this way. Most of the other committees do it based on how many members are in the House. We've approached it as a privilege of individual members to participate in human rights, so there's been more even time. Any member has the same right to the same minutes because of the nature of who we are, and that's always been carried on. In fact, if you look at it, the minor parties probably get more time.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Under these circumstances, we have an agreement. If everyone has more time, that's good.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Khalid, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I absolutely agree with David on this. We've had a very fair distribution of time, given the time constraints we've had in operating this committee in the past. We do whatever is fair

and equitable in terms of how much time everybody gets. We've never had any time issues before in the committee, although given that we have somebody on the committee now who holds a record for talking the most in the House, I don't know how that's going to play out.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Is Kevin joining us?

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I thought that was you, Garnett.

**The Chair:** What I did hear is that we are open to having six minutes of introductory remarks from witnesses instead of the usual 10.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Mr. Chair, from what I've heard here and the agreement, we should, if my colleagues agree with me, empower you to do the math on the clock and divvy up the time once the opening remarks are done, maybe with rotation for rotation's sake, so that whatever the remainder is, it's equally shared among members.

**The Chair:** Okay. I hear that loud and clear. Good.

Garnett.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I would trust you as chair on some of these things. One of the witnesses I'm going to propose is the academic who did the research that was the basis of the Associated Press story. In terms of giving him the time he needs and using whatever facilities to actually be able to go through and show us the data that was the basis of that study, I think it will be important for you to be able to evaluate the right mix of witnesses on panels. There may be cases where the six minutes makes more sense and there may be cases where it doesn't make sense.

I lost track a little bit of where we were in terms of the number of meetings and times over the day. I completely agree with what Iqra said about trying to build on what was already done. I also feel that having a substantial number of meetings to do that building work is important.

• (1540)

**The Chair:** I think we were at Monday and Tuesday as the dates.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Then we were looking at....

**A voice:** Three panels each day....

**The Chair:** Right.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Right, so there was consensus around that. Basically, we'd have three panels each day. Each of those three panels would be over a two-hour meeting. We would have nominally six separate meetings. At each meeting we would have one panel of about three.

**The Chair:** Okay.

To go back to the witnesses and the introductory remarks of six or 10 minutes or whatever, and the flexibility there, who would decide, and how would the witnesses know that in terms of the remarks they're putting together they would have six or 10 minutes or somewhere in between? How would we do that?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** It's at your discretion.

**The Chair:** No, what I'm saying is that we will have to reach out to the witnesses. How do we know which witnesses will need more time? As you just said, you're going to have somebody from the Associated Press come in. I don't know if it would be better to have them do six or 10 minutes. How will we manage that?

Mr. Sweet.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Chair, it's been my experience, although there may be exceptions, that if somebody will be coming in with some substantive evidence, as obviously this one particular witness will be, then generally speaking they will be on a panel that's smaller. As well, as we just said about empowering you, if he's pressed for time and there's more that he needs to do, and he needs another five or 10 minutes, I'd be glad to give up my time if it means a more substantive presentation. Oftentimes, we do that anyway when somebody comes in and they're not as savvy with the committee. Many of our members just tell them to go ahead and finish their points. I think we can work with that pretty well. If he has some AV that he says he absolutely has to throw up there, then I think we can communicate that to the committee and see if we can have an exception.

So I would keep them all to that time. Look, if you notify somebody and tell them six minutes, and they get 10, then it's a bonus.

**The Chair:** That's what I was going to ask the clerk.

When we notify witnesses, do we tell them that it's six minutes or 10 minutes or whatever for the remarks they draft? At the committees I've sat on, they get it almost right to the second.

**The Clerk:** It would be up to the members of the subcommittee and how many witnesses they submit to me. Typically, I would take that list of witnesses, create a master list, and work with the analysts to divide them into panels based on their expertise and who goes well together. At that time, we would see; if there were three or four witnesses per panel, I would adjust accordingly and tell them they have six or 10 minutes for an opening statement.

All of that is to say that if the witnesses came to me faster, then I would know faster.

**The Chair:** That leads us into when we want the deadline to be for witnesses—Tuesday or Wednesday next week?

**The Clerk:** Tomorrow?

**The Chair:** Is everybody...?

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** I mean, I would want to get in touch with some of the stakeholders in my area just to make sure they're okay and see if they have any recommendations. Obviously, we don't want to just keep referring to the same people again and again.

So I would like a little bit more time. Maybe Monday or Tuesday would be better for me.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Garnett.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** One practice I've seen at committees is to have a kind of rolling list where we can submit witnesses to the clerk. Given the tight timelines, I think it's probably important for that process of identification and assessment of availability to begin

right away, but even later next week, if suddenly a name comes in and a member thinks, "Oh, this is actually a great addition", then although it's probably a little bit harder to schedule witnesses who come in later, at the same time there's still the possibility of submission later on.

I'm okay to proceed on that basis. We have some witnesses. None will be that different from what other members have come up with, I think, but we have some names. We may have other names that we identify next week.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** What do you think should be the final date and time?

**The Clerk:** It would be up to the members of the subcommittee.

**The Chair:** It would be pretty hard for you to reach out to somebody on a Thursday or Friday before a Monday or Tuesday meeting.

**The Clerk:** That's correct. Ideally, it would be tomorrow end of day, otherwise Monday end of day.

**The Chair:** And then, as far as keeping it open...but that might not be possible.

**Mr. David Sweet:** That might not happen.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Chair, will we be reviewing the list of witnesses before they're invited? If that's the case, we may want to take a day to go through that list also and have that discussion before they're invited.

I leave that to the committee.

**The Chair:** It would be those who are available; or are you saying even to invite?

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Yes, to invite.... I'm not sure if that's something people want to consider.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Mr. Chair, we'll be forthright with all of our names as of today. Any members who want to vet them can do so. If there's any problem, they can just explain to us why they're disqualified.

I think we'll have to do it electronically, first because of this pandemic and second because time is of the essence. I think if we get our names out in front of everybody, then I'm certainly comfortable, as long as I'm able to go on Wikipedia and see what that person stands for and that they're going to be....

I'm not even worried about what.... Obviously, this is a very sensitive issue. It's just whether they bring substantive weight to the study.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I'm seeing everybody nodding in the right direction.

Sameer.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** I don't know if this is common practice, but when putting forth a name, do we give the motivation, even just a one-liner, as to why we are putting forth the name? Does that happen? It would be for the rest of us. For example, we would know the expertise of a certain witness being proposed. Can we do that?

**The Chair:** David.

**Mr. David Sweet:** For example, Mr. Chair, I would be proposing Jacob Kovalio, Ph.D., who has been an expert on Southeast Asia for 35 years. I would make sure you got that with the link to his work as well.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's good.

I was right that there's a culture here of consensus and collaboration and *Kumbaya*. I feel the love here. Oh, my goodness; it's great.

So we have the dates, and we kind of have a deadline for the witnesses—end of day Monday, but hopefully sooner; if we can, by end of day tomorrow.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Chair, can I just confirm some of the logistics, based on some of the input?

**The Chair:** Go ahead, David.

**Mr. David Sweet:** We'll send our witnesses directly to the clerk. Can the clerk distribute them to the members? That way, we don't have emails going back and forth.

**The Chair:** Okay. The clerk will circulate an ongoing master list.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Just to go back to my first point, if all the members got links to our former work on Uighurs, they would have a working idea, as Iqra was mentioning, of how we could work off that.

It's good reading right before bed anyway.

**The Chair:** That would be very helpful. Thank you.

Iqra.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** If we wanted to discuss or have follow-up questions on the witnesses proposed, would we just reach out directly to the member who proposed them? Would the clerk let us know who has proposed these witnesses?

**The Clerk:** Usually my master list is divided by party.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Okay. That's fine.

**The Chair:** I think we're almost there. Is there any other business?

Garnett, I think you want to get some more words in.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I am new to this committee. Has it been the practice to invite public servants—they're not on my list right now—to share current government action around the file, or has the focus been just on external witnesses?

**The Chair:** I'm new also. I'd have to look to David or Iqra or someone who's been here for a while, or ask the clerk.

I think Alexis was next, and then Sameer.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** That's good. It ties in with what Mr. Genuis just said.

Do ministers, such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for example, appear before the subcommittees as witnesses? Does this happen in this subcommittee?

I think that it would be good to have Mr. Champagne appear before the subcommittee.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I heard what you had to say. I don't know, from the clerk, if that's been done. I don't know what the practice has been. What I have heard is that it's been very collaborative and has functioned very well that way. We've stayed away from partisanship on this committee.

Sameer.

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi:** Mr. Chair, I just want to add some remarks.

First off, David, I'm really happy that you proposed this conversation around the Uighur people. I've been following this for several months and have worked on these files in the past, so I'm really happy we're doing this.

I would like to say, just generally, that we are working in the spirit of collaboration, but I'd just like us to advance this file as much as possible. I know that we're coming in from different angles. We have different ways of viewing things. It's great that we are approaching this in a non-partisan way to advance human rights, international human rights, which is why we're sitting around the table. I'm speaking to myself, but also to everybody here, just trying to underscore that I do want us to advance on this as far as we can. Hopefully, we can come out with some form of report, but I appreciate the collaboration around the table.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We have Iqra, and then David.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Thanks, Chair.

I really miss David Anderson today. We would have these back-and-forths about the value of having public servants or ministers or staff come forward and give substantial evidence, expert evidence, to the conversations we were having. I know that David...both Davids were quite adamant that they didn't really add to the substantial value of the report and that we should give that time to the witnesses and to the experts so that we could build upon that.

I hope we can continue with that as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Mr. Chair, I remember the last time part of my life disappeared in one of these. We just said, you know, if we want a statement from Foreign Affairs, let's get a statement from them. Then we can all read it. Frankly, we're usually ahead of them. We're usually subject experts in these things when we've had them in. Like anybody, I would love to make a partisan point, but I've always tried to make sure I've kept my self-discipline in that regard. That's why we've never called a minister, because it's just too easy to go sideways.

I think the best thing we can do right now for Uighur Muslims who are facing genocide is to do some good work and to get into the hands of government some good recommendations, and hard-hitting ones, too. It's not to embarrass the government. It's just to give them material and say, "Hey, this is what's going on. These are some actions we can take to make sure we are leaders on this."

I really think this is a time when the government of the day can shine in this regard, just like Brian Mulroney shone when we were the leaders against apartheid. If this isn't of the same magnitude or more, I don't know what is.

**The Chair:** I agree. I subbed in on the Rohingya. I also heard about Magnitsky and about the violence against women and children. I thought the way the committee worked was very productive and got the right message out, because they did it in a non-partisan way. We can always see a lot of opportunity to go partisan, but it was so much better and felt so much richer than what I've seen in other committees.

Garnett.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I think those are all fair points. Even if your desire is perhaps not to be partisan, sometimes having a minister in front of you is just a temptation that's too hard to resist. Maybe I can suggest that we do invite the department, as David mentioned, to send a written brief, if they wish. Then there's no

worry about that leading to any kind of back-and-forth. It's part of the testimony as a written brief submitted. This happens with our studies, of course. Written briefs are submitted. As I understand it, they are as much a part of the evidence as anything else. There's just not the back-and-forth questioning piece of it.

So let's be intentional about inviting that input, if it's desired. I think that will help strengthen our study while leaving the hearings themselves for the outside witnesses.

• (1555)

**The Chair:** If you have witnesses you want to be kept confidential, make sure that is clear to the clerk when you send those names in. Thank you.

Alexis, were you up next?

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** No.

**The Chair:** Oh, sorry, I thought I had seen your hand.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** You answered my questions. Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** David.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Perhaps we could now go in camera briefly before we adjourn, Chair. You reminded me of something and we can only discuss it in camera.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Seeing consensus, we'll go in camera at this time.

We'll suspend.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]





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