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Chair: The Honourable Geoff Regan



Special Committee on Canada-China Relations

Friday, October 9, 2020

• (1305)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Marie-France Lafleur): Honourable members of the committee, I see that we have a quorum.

I must inform committee members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, entertain points of order or participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair pursuant to Standing Order 106(2) and the motion that was adopted by the House on September 23, 2020. The chair must be a member of the government party.

I am now ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): I nominate, on behalf of the Liberal side, the Hon. Geoff Regan.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Fragiskatos that Mr. Geoff Regan be elected chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Could I move that the Hon. Geoff Regan return home, seek the leadership of the Liberal Party of Nova Scotia, and become the next premier of his great province?

The Clerk: I'm afraid that goes under debate.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): And he's not leaving me any time, because the deadline is today. I'd have to get 100 signatures and raise \$10,000 by five o'clock, so it's a little too late, John.

Mr. John Williamson: I can give you the signature, not the money.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I appreciate it.

The Clerk: Seeing no further motions, I declare the motion carried, and Mr. Regan duly elected chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I invite Mr. Regan to take the virtual chair.

The Clerk: I invite you to take the virtual chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Clerk, and I thank my colleagues for their confidence. I don't know what it says about their judgment, but I appreciate it.

We can go now, Madam Clerk, to the discussion of future business.

[Translation]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Mr. Chong, please go ahead.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

Congratulations, Mr. Regan, on being nominated and elected by acclamation.

I'm allowed to nominate someone for vice-chair, am I not?

[English]

Hon. Geoff Regan: That's important, yes.

[Translation]

Hon. Michael Chong: I nominate Mr. Genuis for the position of vice-chair of the committee.

[English]

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: Pursuant to the motion adopted on September 23, 2020, the committee can also elect three vice-chairs: one from the official opposition, one from the Bloc Québécois, and one from the New Democratic Party.

It has been moved by Mr. Chong that Mr. Genuis be elected as a vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

[Translation]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Madam Clerk, I would like to nominate Mr. Bergeron, from the Bloc Québécois, for the position of second vice-chair.

The Clerk: All right. No problem.

I'll get to that in just a moment.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Very good.

The Clerk: Are there any further motions on the Conservative side?

[English]

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Congratulations, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Dubourg beat me to it in nominating Mr. Bergeron from the Bloc Québécois as vice-chair. I would invite someone to be kind enough to nominate me from the NDP.

[Translation]

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I nominate Mr. Harris for the position of vice-chair of the committee.

[English]

The Clerk: If we can just go back to the second nomination for a vice-chair,

[Translation]

If we step back....

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): We're an eager bunch, Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: For the vice-chair from the Bloc Québécois, it has been moved by Mr. Dubourg that Mr. Bergeron be elected as vice-chair. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

Excellent.

Thank you very much.

I declare Mr. Bergeron duly elected vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you to my fellow members.

[English]

The Clerk: If we go to the vice-chair from the New Democratic Party, Mr. Chong nominated Mr. Harris.

Are there any further motions?

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried, and Mr. Harris duly elected as vice-chair of the committee.

Congratulations to all of you.

Mr. Chair, it's back to you.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Clerk, for giving me the indication of when it's the right time to go on to questions about future business.

I see Mr. Fragiskatos has his hand up. I'll try to keep an eye out and make a list of those who use the "raise hand" function. Hopefully, I'll be able to see it if you use it, but I see Mr. Harris after that, for the moment. Let's carry on.

Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Chair, if I could, I propose to read routine motions into the record to structure the committee.

• (1310)

The Chair: All right. I guess we can go ahead with that now. After that, I'll go to Mr. Harris, but we may have to discussions once those are read in.

Mr. Fragiskatos, why don't you go ahead and read those. I think that's proper procedure.

Mr. Jack Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we did this yesterday in PROC, where there were some suggested amendments. The initial motion was to approve them all as one, but perhaps it might be helpful to identify the particular motions that may have a suggested amendment before Mr. Fragiskatos moves a motion for the entirety of them. I wasn't sure what his plan was.

The Chair: I think Mr. Oliphant has his hand up on the same point of order.

Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): By procedure, I would like to hear the motion, and then it would be open to amendment. It's very hard for us not to have the motion and then to discuss amendments. I think it would be best if we could get a motion out and then hear any proposed amendments.

The Chair: I think Mr. Fragiskatos has the option of reading the whole motion, and then we can go to discussion after that. There are a variety of ways, of course, that the committee can handle this.

Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I'll go through them one by one, Mr. Chair. If colleagues have thoughts on what's been raised, of course they are free to speak. I'm happy to hear views. These are basic routine motions that we've seen in other committees and in this one as well.

The first routine motion relates to analyst services, as follows:

That the committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the Chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist it in its work.

The Chair: Maybe the clerk can assist me.

Do we normally read them all and then go on? I thought that was the process that Mr. Fragiskatos was proposing. What's normal in these cases?

The Clerk: Just so that it's clear for everyone, it's easier to go through them one by one and then ask if there's amendment or debate, and then adopt it and move on to the next one.

The Chair: That's great.

Is there amendment or debate in relation to the first motion we just heard?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Let's go on to the next one, Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you, Chair.

This is regarding the subcommittee on agenda and procedure:

That the subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five members; the chair, one Member from each Party, and that the subcommittee work in a spirit of collaboration.

The Chair: Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: The motion adopted in February said that it “be composed of five members: the Chair, the three Vice-Chairs, and one other member from the government, and that the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure work in a spirit of collaboration.” I suggest that we adopt that wording for this committee.

The Chair: Does anyone else wish to comment on this?

Mr. Oliphant, did I see your hand up?

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I was ready to vote.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I'd consider it a friendly amendment, Mr. Chair. I'm fine with that.

The Chair: That's what I was hoping.

Is it agreed, as amended by Mr. Harris?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order. I wonder if we can do the voting by asking if it's agreed or if there are objections. Then we can proceed to a vote if there are objections. If these are mostly going to be carried unanimously, we can just....

The Chair: I appreciate that, because I'm looking for a way to do this quickly. I will say, “Is it agreed or are there objections?” In other words, if you object, I expect you to raise your hand, and then I'll give you the chance to speak. Does that sound like a good way to do this? Okay.

Are there any objections?

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

The Chair: Let's go on to the next one.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: The next is on meeting without a quorum:

That the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four members are present, including two members of the opposition and two members of the government, but when travelling outside the parliamentary precinct, that the meeting begin after 15 minutes, regardless of members present.

• (1315)

The Chair: Are there any objections?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos, go on to the next one, please.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: On the time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses, it reads as follows: “That witnesses be given five minutes”—it was previously 10 minutes—“for their opening statements; that, at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated six (6) minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows: Round 1: Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois, New Democratic Party.”

For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows: Conservative Party, five (5) minutes; Liberal Party, five (5) minutes; Conservative Party, five (5) minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes; Bloc Québécois, two and a half

(2.5) minutes; New Democratic Party, two and a half (2.5) minutes.”

The Chair: Are there any objections or amendments?

I see Mr. Harris, and then Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Jack Harris: I would like to amend the second round provisions in accordance with the decision that the PROC committee made on September 28, that the second round offer the following rotation: the Conservative Party, five minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes; Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes; New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes; Conservative Party, five minutes; and Liberal Party, five minutes.

This has been adopted by some of the other committees and I would urge that we do that. It's deemed to be fairer to all of the parties, given that sometimes the burden falls upon the Bloc Québécois and the NDP to lose time at the end, especially if we're squeezed for time due to the number of witnesses.

The Chair: We have a proposed amendment.

Mr. Genuis, do you wish to speak to the proposed amendment?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I was going to propose that same amendment if Mr. Harris hadn't.

Yes, this is what I understand has been discussed and agreed on. We have had the experience at this committee as well of losing some time at the end. When you only have that two and a half-minute slot, I understand that it's something to lose when you are already starting with a little less time.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, the floor is yours.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My comment is along precisely the same lines. In light of the committee's decisions before Parliament was prorogued and in the spirit of co-operation, I'd like us to go back to that method. Obviously, I wholeheartedly and without reservation second the amendment put forward by the member from the New Democratic Party.

[*English*]

The Chair: I don't see any other hands up, so I'll ask if there are any objections to Mr. Harris' amendment.

I see that Mr. Oliphant wishes to speak.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I am not objecting to the amended rotation on the second round. I want to signal that I would like not to go right to a vote on the amended motion because I'd like to comment on the time for opening remarks.

The Chair: Okay, the question is whether that's within the amendment or not. I'm not sure it is.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I don't believe it's in the amendment, but sometimes we go from the amendment right to the motion. I want to raise a question about the amended motion, once it's done.

The Chair: Okay.

First, let's deal with the motion to amend.

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

The Chair: Now we can go back to the main motion as amended.

Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I want to check on the change in the opening remarks from 10 minutes to five minutes. I want to ensure that there is some ability for the chair to have flexibility on that. There will be times when there is a sole witness on a panel and there will be times when there are three or four witnesses on a panel. I would think we are doing a disservice to our witnesses by saying that. If there are only two witnesses, it may be appropriate to have seven and a half minutes each or 10 minutes each.

I want to check the wording to make sure that the chair has discretion to manage our time in that normal first part of an hour of a session. I just want to have it reread to make sure that it's not absolutely always five minutes. I think that would be a disservice.

• (1320)

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos, could you read that part?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Sure. I think what Mr. Oliphant has put there is quite reasonable, but I'll read it again: "That witnesses be given five"—it was previously 10—"minutes for their opening statements; that, at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated six (6) minutes for the first questioner", and so on.

The pertinent part is what I just read out.

The Chair: I don't detect discretion in the hands of the chair in that regard, Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Yes, the discretion part came later.

I would like to propose an amendment. I could do it whichever way the committee likes. We could add the word "normally", so that it would say "normally be five minutes"; that gives discretion to the chair to move it around.

I just think you need this ability; otherwise, it doesn't work.

I move to add "normally".

The Chair: Mr. Harris, do you wish to speak to this particular amendment?

Mr. Genuis also put his hand up.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: I want to support the amendment but perhaps make it a little broader.

Yesterday, at the public safety committee meeting, we gave the discretion to the chair up front and mentioned five to seven minutes—again with the same discussion about its depending upon how many witnesses you had. If you have three witnesses, maybe five minutes is appropriate, but if you have only one witness, 10 minutes might be okay, depending whether it's a one and a half hour meeting or a one-hour session.

I think the committee has had enough experience with the chair to be willing to accept the chair's use of his discretion wisely. I think it is quite appropriate for us to do this.

The Chair: Well, I'm shocked to hear that, but I'll go to Mr. Genuis now.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Let me put a concrete suggestion on the table. Let's amend the motion by adding a line—it could be at the very end of the motion—saying that the chair be authorized to adjust the time of the opening statement in consultation with the vice-chairs.

The Chair: Are there any objections to that? I guess this is another option.

Rather than get into the question of whether this is an amendment of your motion, Rob, I think we should deal with Mr. Genuis' proposal, and if it's accepted, we can go from there, I think.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I'm fine with that; I can withdraw mine. If this is a subamendment to the amendment, I can go with it.

The point is that I would like you to have the ability to do this.

The Chair: Frankly, I like the idea of doing it in consultation with the vice-chairs, because these things have become quite subjective and might lead to questions about whether you're being fair. It's always nice to have agreement on these things.

Do we have any objections to Mr. Genuis' proposal?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Does that dispose of this motion entirely? I think it does.

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

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos, let's go on to the next one, please.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This relates to document distribution. The text is as follows:

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

The Chair: Are there any objections to this motion?

The Chair: Mr. Williamson.

Mr. John Williamson: Does the committee provide translation services, if witnesses have their briefs in early enough, or is it always up to the witnesses?

The Chair: Madam Clerk, could you explain that to us?

The Clerk: We certainly can, if we have the time. Normally it takes about 72 hours, but yes, we can do it.

Mr. John Williamson: Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any objections to this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos, let's go to the next motion.

• (1325)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: This is on working meals:

That the clerk of the committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the committee and its subcommittees.

The Chair: Partly this is—

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: We'll see where that one goes. Obviously, the pandemic has other ideas. This is the routine motion that we've operated under, and hence I'm introducing it as, let's say, a matter of convention.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: We could use Uber Eats.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Well, there you go.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: If you wish to make history, Mr. Genuis, by introducing an amendment that mentions Uber Eats, you'd be the first to do so in parliamentary history, I think.

The Chair: I'm looking around for any food nearby here in my office. It's a little better at home.

Are there any objections to this motion? Seeing none, it's agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Here too the pandemic has other ideas. In any case, it is a routine motion that needs to be read into the record. This is with regard to travel, accommodation and living expenses of witnesses:

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

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Would anyone care to comment?

Shall the motion carry?

All right.

[*English*]

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The next one is with regard to access to in camera meetings:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person at an in camera meeting and that one additional person from each House officer's office be allowed to be present.

The Chair: Are there any objections?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Mr. Paul-Hus, you may go ahead.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you.

I'd just like to clarify something regarding the presence of staff members from whips' offices. They can't be present when we meet in Ottawa, but they can be at in camera meetings virtually. I believe they're considered government or House officers.

I wanted to make that clear so there's no confusion.

The Chair: Is that clear?

Are there any further comments?

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you, Chair.

This is the second-last motion. It relates to the transcripts of in camera meetings:

That one copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee or by their staff.

The Chair: Are there any objections?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Actually, that wasn't the second-last motion. This is the second-last one.

It is rather lengthy, so just indulge me for a bit. It's with regard to notices of motion:

That 48 hours notice, interpreted as two nights, shall be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration; provided that (1) the notice be filed with the clerk of the committee no later than 4:00 p.m. (EST) from Monday to Friday; that (2) the motion be distributed to members in both official languages by the clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline time; and that (3) notices received after the deadline hour or on non-business days be deemed to have been received during the next business day and that when the committee is travelling on official business, no substantive motions may be moved.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Are there any objections?

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

The final motion is with regard to other routine motions adopted:

That all meetings, other than those deemed in camera, be televised or, if that is not possible, then webcast.

• (1330)

The Chair: Are there any objections?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Jack Harris: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Harris on a point of order.

Mr. Jack Harris: I may have missed this properly, but I was looking at the notice of motion from previous times and the one Mr. Fragiskatos read out. One of them says “4:00 p.m. (EST) from Monday to Friday” and the other one has no designation of the time zone. Are we to presume it's Eastern Standard Time, or was that actually said by Mr. Fragiskatos?

Do you have the right—

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I believe I do, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Jack Harris: You said Eastern Standard Time.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: That's right.

Mr. Jack Harris: Perfect.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Harris; it's good to have that.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: My apologies, but I believe I did read that into the record a few moments ago.

The Chair: It's good to have the clarification.

Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Of course.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to move an additional routine motion. This responds to an issue that we had in the last session of the committee. There was some confusion and debate about the application of Standing Order 106(4). This standing order applies to every regular committee and allows members of the committee to request that a meeting take place. There was some question about whether or not the standing order applies to a special committee.

In order to have clarity around that issue, I'd like to move that the chair be instructed to convene a meeting of the committee within five days of the receipt by the clerk of the committee by email of a request signed by any four members of the committee provided that a) the reasons for convening such a meeting shall be stated in the request, and b) there shall be 48 hours' notice of the meeting.

That applies the same rules that exist for all standing committees with respect to special meetings to this committee as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before I go to Mr. Oliphant, Madam Clerk, is there anything about that that's not in order?

The Clerk: Not to me. Routine motions are normal motions; it's just that they apply throughout the session.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I just have a concern about it for two reasons. I think we should get clarification from the House on this, not just from our own very good procedural clerk.

First of all, it's not a routine motion. We do have routine motions, and this is not routine. We are a special committee, the only special committee that exists this Parliament. There are Standing Orders related to special committees that are intentionally different from the Standing Orders related to standing committees. Special committees and standing committees are different, and I would like to un-

derstand what the thinking is in our Parliament where it has decided that special committees don't have that same requirement.

I don't want to assume that I know the answer to that, but someone may have intentionally decided not to put that under the work of a special committee, and there may be a reason for it that has to do with other things.

I think it's not a routine motion, and so I would like to not vote on it. I'm not saying that we defeat it, but I would like to get a response from the Clerk of the House about the history of why it is intentionally not done in our overall Standing Orders.

I'm not sure how I best accomplish what I want to do, such as whether I move to adjourn debate on it, which I could do. Now that I have the floor, I could move to adjourn debate, subject to the clerk's clarifying this with House officials.

Is it possible to make a motion to adjourn debate, subject to the clerk's verifying that it is an appropriate motion with the House and the history of our Standing Orders? I think we need to honour Parliament. We are the master of our own house, yes, but we should also honour Parliament.

I would, therefore, move that we adjourn debate on this, subject to the clerk's clarifying the Standing Orders that apply to standing committees and special committees.

● (1335)

The Chair: Madam Clerk, do you...?

The Clerk: I can perhaps say a few things. A motion to adjourn is normally not debatable and not amendable, but if you add a condition saying that the clerk needs to come back to the committee with some kind of information, that becomes amendable and debatable. It's really your choice, your option, of whichever motion you would like to move.

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I don't want to stifle debate on this. I just think it's important. There are two principles. One is the principle of the way special committees have been set up; the second principle is just to have full awareness at this committee. I think it's difficult when people move motions like this that are not routine and without having discussed it with people ahead of time. That was another problem we had in the last Parliament: Things would be brought suddenly to the committee without good process.

I don't want to stifle discussion. My intent is not to close this issue, but to get further information. I necessarily have to make the caveat that you, the clerk, would do some research for us on it and get back to us. I understand that it's debatable or amendable; I get that. I could just move to adjourn, but I don't want to do that. I hope we can move to adjourn so you can do your work.

The Chair: In your previous statement you said you “could” move it. I take it that you are now moving what you said earlier.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Yes. I will move that we adjourn debate subject to the clerk verifying with the House the Standing Orders as they apply to special committees to make sure this is not ultra vires.

The Chair: Okay.

On debate on that motion, I have Mr. Fragiskatos so far.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Bergeron had his hand up first and then mine was up after his. It may be that others have identified their desire to speak in other ways. That's just what the—

The Chair: I very much appreciate your help because it is possible for me to miss that.

I saw Mr. Fragiskatos earlier, then I'll go to Mr. Bergeron and Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I realize I'm the one introducing the routine motions, but as a member of the committee I also feel compelled to offer a comment too.

I echo what Mr. Oliphant has said.

I'm not so sure that special committees possess this power. We should err on the side of prudence and be as careful as possible. I think what Mr. Oliphant has proposed is not unreasonable. He has not dismissed what Mr. Genuis is saying. In the spirit of making sure that we are doing everything as we should, it would make a lot of sense to adjourn to allow the clerk to look into this for us. Of course, we can revisit the issue.

Like Mr. Oliphant, I'm not closed to that. I'd be very happy to discuss this further to make sure that we're on the right footing here.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, you may go ahead.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm a little uncomfortable with Mr. Oliphant's motion, not substance-wise, but form-wise, given that the clerk told us the motion was perfectly in order.

The idea that a special committee would not be allowed to convene a meeting at the request of four committee members strikes me as specious. The clerk told us that the motion was perfectly

valid and in order. I think my preference is to vote on the motion now, instead of putting it off until later.

That said, I understand Mr. Oliphant's reservations. I, myself, have often raised concerns in the past when motions were put forward without members being advised and having discussed them ahead of time.

I have another concern related to our experience with Standing Order 106 and its non-application to the committee. It's the fact that four members of the same political party were able to request that a committee meeting be convened, giving the impression of a partisan manoeuvre. However, the committee must—at least, as I understand it—work in the spirit of co-operation, pursuant to the routine motion that we just adopted and that had been adopted previously.

If I were going to propose an amendment to Mr. Genuis's motion, it would be to have four members from at least two political parties represented on the committee.

Since I understand that there must first—

• (1340)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant, you have a point of order.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Thank you.

We have an amendment on the floor and now the member is amending the original amendment.

We have a motion on the floor to adjourn debate.

We're not talking about the original motion.

I think due process is really good; it works, but we can't now be amending that motion while there's a motion on the floor to adjourn debate, subject to your ruling on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Oliphant's objection has to do with the fact that we aren't debating Mr. Genuis's motion right now; we're actually on Mr. Oliphant's motion.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, with all due respect to you and Mr. Oliphant, I had clearly understood that it was improper for me to propose an amendment now.

I took care to use the conditional tense, saying that if I were going to propose an amendment, this is what I would do. Then, Mr. Oliphant stopped me from going any further.

Since we have to deal, first and foremost, with the motion to adjourn debate on Mr. Genuis's motion, so to speak, I can't do it. However, if he had let me finish, I could have clarified that. Frankly, when it comes to making friends and getting his fellow members to support his motions, Mr. Oliphant doesn't always go about it in the right way.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

Are there any further comments before we vote?

[*English*]

Mr. Genuis, you were on the list.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to the conditional discussion of prospective further amendments, I'm very open to having discussions about amendments to this motion. I agree with Mr. Bergeron that we should move this forward. Respectfully, this isn't a question of a substantive issue or study. This is a question of an operating procedure for the committee, which is the item we're discussing right now.

I want to maybe respond to some of the things Mr. Oliphant said. The issue around whether Standing Order 106(4) applies was a question of debate, and to be fair, a point of disagreement between folks on this committee before, because it was the Conservatives who wrote the motion that created this committee. In it, we said the powers of a regular standing committee would apply to this committee. In our minds, that included Standing Order 106(4). Therefore, it's not a question of whether the Standing Orders intended something or other. We were the ones who wrote the motion and what we intended was for Standing Order 106(4) to apply.

However, subsequent to that, you had suggested that you had a different interpretation of the motion that created it. What I'm trying to do is insert clarity into a place where there wasn't clarity before, to say in regard to a standing order that, as I can say as one of the people involved in drafting the original motion, it was the intention of the drafters of the motion that created this committee for Standing Order 106(4) to apply as it applies with every other standing committee. That was the intention. There was a certain interpretation about whether it was written in a way such that it applies.

It's not a question of needing to get the House's permission. The committee has a right to pass motions with respect to how it schedules meetings. We can have a conversation about whether the number of members or the formula is exactly right, but the need for this motion is that, with all due respect to our chair, whom we all have a great deal of respect for, there should be a mechanism in the rules that allows members of committees to convene a meeting of the committee if there is a period of time during which the chair is deciding not to convene a committee.

In the absence of Standing Order 106(4), a chair could decide not to convene a committee meeting even when a majority of the committee wants to see that meeting convened. Certainly Standing Order 106(4) was used significantly previously on other committees to convene important studies around systemic racism and around a range of other issues at other committees.

I think it's important. We can discuss the particulars of the procedure, but it's important that we, at this opening meeting, put in place a procedure that allows a group of members of the committee to summon a committee to meet and proceed with its work.

I suggest that means we vote down Mr. Oliphant's motion.

● (1345)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: It's Mr. Dubourg's turn. Then, we'll go to Mr. Fragiskatos, followed by Mr. Harris.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I fully appreciate Mr. Genuis's motion, because unique situations can arise that make it necessary to discuss specific issues. At the same time, the point my fellow member Mr. Oliphant is trying to make is that this is a special committee. There is a very clear distinction between a standing committee and a special committee, so we'll need to determine whether we can be empowered to do that.

I also want to point out that, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, House employees have to take all the appropriate steps to make sure committees can meet. Now that all the committees are starting up again, we need to determine the ideal circumstances for holding meetings of the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations, pursuant to Standing Order 106(4).

For all of those reasons, it's a good idea to check what's doable with the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

This is a motion to adjourn. That doesn't mean that we completely reject Mr. Genuis's motion. It's simply a matter of making sure that we are on the same page as the representatives in the House of Commons in order to satisfy the requirements of the motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: I have Mr. Fragiskatos, followed by Mr. Harris and Mr. Paul-Hus.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's our first real meeting. I didn't mention this when I spoke a few moments ago, but it's a relevant point and I hope Mr. Genuis doesn't take it the wrong way. Surprise motions are just that, surprise motions. When we had that occur in the previous session, there were members around the table who didn't go for that. It never really served this committee when we had those sorts of motions come up like that out of nowhere, as they have today.

In any case, we're here, and as I said before—colleagues on the Liberal side have echoed this—there's no intent here to push this aside. What has been suggested is that we leave it for the clerk to look at and then come back and discuss further.

For example, if you look at the text of Standing Order 106(4), while the word "committees" is used, "special committees" is not used at all. For that reason, I feel uncomfortable in supporting what Mr. Genuis has suggested. We have to be completely onside when it comes to parliamentary convention and protocol. While the motion Mr. Genuis has put forward here today does merit a close look, analysis and debate, I'm not sure we're in a position to comment on it without the full analysis given to it by someone who's an expert on these things, and that would be the clerk.

Mr. Genuis has said that including something like this was the intention of the Conservatives when they first put the motion forward in Parliament to create a special committee to analyze Canada-China relations. We cannot analyze intentions. It's a guessing game if we get into that. We have to analyze facts. What stands out to me is that Standing Order 106(4) does not say anything about special committees. For that reason we have to leave it in the hands of the clerk.

I would ask Mr. Genuis if he would respectfully be open to taking back his motion, taking it off the table and reintroducing it at such time when we have had the clerk look into the matter. We can then debate it based on what she finds is appropriate and in order.

● (1350)

The Chair: I have Mr. Harris next, followed by Mr. Paul-Hus.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

At first glance, I was inclined to accept Mr. Oliphant's concern about there being a standing order where there has already been a ruling that applied in one circumstance but not for special committees, and the question of whether or not it's appropriate for us to adopt a standing order of the House as a mechanism for calling a meeting, but I'm persuaded that this is really... Whether it's called a power or a scheduling issue is kind of irrelevant and may be just a matter of argument as opposed to a matter of interpretation. Just because it's in the Standing Orders for committees doesn't mean we can't adopt a similar method of scheduling a meeting as a committee, so I'm open to that.

I should also remind people that I was in favour of our having meetings, despite the fact there was no procedure for doing that other than 106(4), and I would have supported calling a meeting under those circumstances.

I would also point out that the fact that you call a meeting doesn't mean that the four people who signed the document have the say as to what goes on at that meeting. They have to state what the purpose is, so that the meeting is called. However, you could show up for the meeting and then say, "No, we don't want to do that" or "No, we're going to meet, but we're not going to have the meeting. We're not going to meet for two hours now because we're not prepared to deal with this question."

It turns out that, when we've used this as a party to get something on the table, and we have over the years, particularly in the summer session when there are no committee meetings regularly scheduled, you often end up going to Ottawa for a meeting on the issue, but all that happens is a meeting that says, "No, we're not going to do that" or "We'll schedule it for sometime down the road". You get to tell the news media what you wanted to talk about, but you don't get to have the meeting about the substance.

That's the context in which I'm saying that this issue as to whether it's a standing order, what the standing order was intending and what the purpose of it was are all matters of debate, and if we can debate it another time... I'm mindful of what Mr. Fragiskatos said, that surprise motions don't really go over that well in this committee because people aren't prepared to deal with them, which may have given rise to Mr. Oliphant's response to wait and give us a chance to think about it. Perhaps it would be wise to put the de-

bate on this issue off for the next meeting and say, "Okay, let's raise it again the next time so people will have time to think about it."

If Mr. Oliphant wants to consult parliamentary experts on what the purpose of this is to have his arguments brought forward, that doesn't seem to be an unreasonable thing to do, but I wouldn't say that the... If the motion in terms of scheduling is in order, and that depends on a ruling of the chair at this meeting, then it's perfectly all right to decide how meetings would be scheduled in the same way that we decide as a committee when we will have our meetings.

We're going to get advice from the House as to when it's possible to have virtual meetings, and it may be that the idea of five days is not reasonable, given that the House can't necessarily find the time, the facilities and all of the virtual accoutrements that we need to have a meeting. That might be something we need to find out first as well. I would be in favour of postponing the discussion, but I don't think we need to have a ruling from someone else outside of the committee as to whether or not we can consider such a motion.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Paul-Hus, please go ahead.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Although I'm new to the committee, I did understand one thing in reading the motion to establish the special committee. Paragraph (i) stipulates that "the committee be granted all of the powers of a standing committee, as provided in the Standing Orders, as well as the power to travel".

Basically, what that tells me is that this is a special committee, but one with the same powers as a standing committee. The committee is therefore empowered to do the same things as the Standing Committee on National Defence or the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, for example.

Madam Clerk, I know you don't participate in debate, but could you get back to us with confirmation on that?

The second point I want to make is that I would expect a committee like the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations not to behave like some bloated body that moves along at a glacial pace. It is imperative that the committee respond to situations. The antagonistic relationship between Canada and China is the very reason the committee was created. Our job is to step in. If an issue requiring the committee's involvement arises, we mustn't let anything bog us down, because that is our chief duty.

● (1355)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Paul-Hus.

I have a question for the clerk.

In light of the conversation, I'd like to know whether the committee is empowered to give itself this ability.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, I can comment.

Yes, the committee can adopt whatever it likes as a routine motion. A routine motion is one that is in effect for the duration of the session. As for whether Standing Order 106(4) applies or not, that portion of the motion can simply be removed, and the committee can decide how it wishes to meet.

Committees are always said to be masters of their own destiny, but they must stay within their mandates. In the special committee's case, the mandate is set out in the motion of September 23, which refers to the December 10 motion.

Of course, debate can be adjourned on any motion, as Mr. Oliphant moved. It wasn't clear whether there was a condition or not, so whether the motion was dilatory or debatable.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

I don't see anyone else wishing to debate.

We will go to Mr. Oliphant, and then Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I would like to add that my issue is not about our deciding how we work, when we work and all of that. It's about invoking a section of the Standing Orders, a standing order that I don't think applies.

Absolutely, we could do this—I'm not against it—but I get a little confused. Mr. Genuis said we could have a situation where a majority of the committee wants to meet and the chair won't let it meet. That's quite different from Standing Order 106(4), which is not a majority of the committee.

I think we should take our time on these things. We should do it well. If this committee wants to set a rule requiring meetings to happen should two, three, four, five, six or seven members of the committee want to meet, that's fine. However, it's invoking that we should apply a section, a standing order; that's my issue. I know I get a bit fundamentalist about this, but the Standing Orders are there to protect us, to help us do our work. If they're in the way of a special committee doing its work, I'm happy to find a way around the fact that this doesn't apply in order to do our work well. That's my point. I know it sounds arcane, but I want to make sure....

If the whole part about Standing Order 106(4) were withdrawn and it was "here is an idea that we do", I would be fine with it. I just don't think we have the power to demand that a standing order be applied to our work if it doesn't apply.

The Chair: I think that's the first time I have heard a United Church minister describe himself as a "fundamentalist".

Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was attempting to make a joke along similar lines.

I think we have a real ecumenical moment of agreement here insofar as I want to clarify that the motion I proposed referred to 106(4) as explaining why the motion says what it says. The motion I put forward does not mention 106(4) at all. It simply creates a procedure. That procedure happens to mimic Standing Order 106(4), but it does not invoke Standing Order 106(4).

The motion I put forward again was that the chair be instructed to convene a meeting of the committee within five days of the receipt by the clerk of the committee by email of a request signed by any four members of the committee provided that a) the reasons for convening such a meeting shall be stated in the request, and b) there shall be 48 hours' notice of the meeting.

Again, that mimics the language of 106(4) but does not reference Standing Order 106(4), so I think the procedural point Mr. Oliphant raised is addressed there.

I will note that the motion put forward that we're operating under says "that the committee be granted all of the powers of a standing committee". That's where the ambiguity came from, the application of that section, "all of the powers of a standing committee", but it certainly has the power to put in place a procedure in terms of scheduling.

Again, we can discuss the particulars of that procedure. However, absent that procedure, we could have a theoretical situation where not only the majority but all of the committee members except the chair could want the committee to meet and could still not compel the committee to meet.

We did have a situation earlier this year when there was a desire on the part of all of the opposition members on the committee to meet in some form, but given the chair's ruling at the time that, without this clarification that 106(4) didn't apply, there wasn't a procedure by which that meeting could be summoned to take place.

In general, in terms of the operation of this first meeting, I think the point about people wanting to be informed of motions ahead of time.... This is our first meeting together. I think we want to use the time to have discussions about issues. If we don't, then we're going to end up scheduling another committee business meeting.

I hope there's a will to discuss, in general terms, at least where we're going in terms of agenda afterwards. I will leave that for the time being, but we're here, we have two hours scheduled, so let's use the time as much as we can. I think creating a procedure by which we can have other meetings take place at the will of members is an important part of that, and having the clarity of that in the first meeting is worthwhile.

● (1400)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I'll ask Mr. Bergeron, because he put forward a friendly amendment.... I know what I said earlier, but we also have a lot of important work to do on this committee, and if we can deal with this today, then maybe so be it.

Can I ask Mr. Bergeron to read his friendly amendment again? I think there could be a meeting of the minds. I think what Mr. Genuis is talking about and what Mr. Bergeron is talking about could be amenable to me and perhaps to my Liberal colleagues.

If Mr. Bergeron wants to go ahead, I'm all ears.

The Chair: Okay, but we're on Mr. Oliphant's motion.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: At your discretion, of course....

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I think it is in order for Mr. Bergeron, if he agrees, to read out the motion he wanted to propose once we've dealt with Mr. Oliphant's motion.

Mr. Bergeron, please go ahead.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, if it's okay with Mr. Oliphant, I'm going to come back to my motion.

The problem last time may have been that the request was addressed to the chair and came solely from four Conservative members. That may have given the impression that it was a so-called partisan manoeuvre. Since we've agreed to work in the spirit of co-operation, I'd like to propose an amendment to Mr. Genuis's motion, to stipulate that the four members be from at least two political parties represented on the committee. That way, the request would not be seen as merely a tactic on the part of one political party.

Can we agree that it should be two political parties? Does anyone want it to be more? What I'm proposing is that the four members be from at least two political parties represented on the committee. In a nutshell, that would be my amendment should we have the opportunity to proceed with Mr. Genuis's motion.

• (1405)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Genuis, it's over to you.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I'm going to try to do something radical here and seek unanimous consent that we deem Mr. Oliphant's motion withdrawn, that we amend the motion by adding, "from at least two different parties" after it says "four members of the committee", and that we deem the motion adopted.

If there is unanimous consent, we could do all of those things at once: withdraw Mr. Oliphant's motion, add in the amendment and then adopt the motion. That's what I would seek unanimous consent for. If there isn't, we can do it more slowly and mechanically, but I wonder if there's agreement to do that.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I would be happy to give unanimous consent to withdraw my motion to adjourn debate and seek advice. That part is fine. I just don't want to deem a motion adopted that's as complex as that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Fair enough.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: The reason I say that is that Standing Order 106(4), with the number four, is based on a committee of 10 members that does indeed demand what Mr. Bergeron was asking for, because within those 10 members, there are usually three Conservatives, one New Democrat and one Bloc Québécois.

My problem with even the number four is that it doesn't account for the fact that we have 12 members on the committee, as requested by the Conservative Party. I am fine—and other members will

have their own opinions on unanimous consent to withdraw my motion—but I'd like to have a little bit of debate about the appropriate way of getting Mr. Bergeron's request, because it is different with 12 members than with 10 members.

The Chair: Does that mean you're withdrawing your motion, Mr. Oliphant?

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I can. Once a motion has been made, it kind of belongs out there. That's for you to decide, but if you are happy with my withdrawing the motion, I would do that at this time.

The Chair: Are there any objections to Mr. Oliphant withdrawing his motion?

I see none.

(Motion withdrawn)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, if you'd like to propose an amendment to the motion, now would be the time to do so.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

After listening to the part of Mr. Genuis's motion about the four members, I think Mr. Oliphant brought up an important point. In other words, if the special committee wishes to apply Standing Order 106, given that it has slightly more members than regular committees do, perhaps we should adjust the number of committee members or signatures required to have a committee meeting convened.

I'm going to stick to the amendment I proposed, which is to add, after "four members", "from at least two political parties represented on the committee".

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any objections?

Mr. Genuis, go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have no objections. I'm happy to proceed on that basis. In terms of Mr. Oliphant's earlier point, Standing Order 106(4) just says "four members". It's obviously based on a model, but the way it works at a standing committee is that any four members, including four Liberals or four Conservatives, could summon a meeting on their own.

This is a much more consultative requirement, in terms of engaging all political parties, than exists at other standing committees, but we're comfortable with it. I suspect if you were to change it from four members to five members, it would be a distinction without a difference, because to get four members of the multiple parties, you'd need, for example, three Conservatives and one Bloc. It would be just as easy to get four and one, or something like that.

I don't know if it's a major point either way, but Mr. Bergeron's amendment works and it's something we're willing to accept.

• (1410)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you.

I wanted to hear Mr. Bergeron's amendment, because I think it lays down a possible good foundation.

However, I would put the following to him and to my colleagues here. What about staying with the four members view, but one member from each of the recognized four parties, so there would be a Liberal, Conservative, Bloc and NDP? It wouldn't have to be unanimous. The four members would not all have to agree. However, you'd have to have a majority to go ahead with a meeting request.

Is that something colleagues would consider? I think it's a fairer approach, with all due respect. You would have all recognized parties taking part in the discussion and it does not require unanimity.

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos, I don't hear you proposing a motion to amend at this point.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I'm proposing a motion to amend Mr. Bergeron's friendly amendment to Mr. Genuis's motion.

The Chair: I have Mr. Harris next.

Mr. Jack Harris: I want to speak in opposition to Mr. Fragiskatos' amendment to the amendment. I'm assuming we're still talking about amendments to an amendment here.

I think the purpose of the rule, if you want to call it that, in the Standing Orders is to allow members who are not a majority to force a meeting to take place, or at least to have a discussion. If you're going to require all four parties to do it, then it just becomes a consensus that the chair would have to abide by. I don't think that's the real purpose of having this rule in the first place.

Having more than one party is important. In fact, if that rule were in place, the attempt to get this committee going might have succeeded if it weren't for the manifesto that was in the letter, which might have been more acceptable to more than one party and would have had greater consent. Whether or not the rule would still be able to apply is a different matter.

I think it's important to have more than one party. With regard to the rule of four, your point is well taken; it's not really material whether it's four or five. The idea would still be that there would be a meeting, and a majority would have to decide what to do once that meeting is in fact convened.

I'm speaking against the subamendment and in favour of Mr. Bergeron's amendment, and the fact that we're creating a rule that's common sense of the application of a similar approach for scheduling that's in Standing Order 106.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I originally proposed four members, but let me propose three parties instead of two. I know we keep going around here, but I think we can come to a resolution.

I'm bending quite a bit there to go back from four to three. What do my colleagues think about that?

The Chair: I think you're asking to withdraw your previous motion to amend.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I'm sorry. I'm not following the procedures correctly here. I'm withdrawing what I had originally proposed and putting a new amendment on the table, to change the number that Mr. Bergeron had suggested from two parties to three parties.

The Chair: Is it agreed that Mr. Fragiskatos can withdraw his original motion to amend?

I see no objections.

(Subamendment withdrawn)

The Chair: You have proposed to move now to three parties. Is that correct?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: That's correct.

The Chair: We're debating that question.

Are there any comments or points on that?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I disagree with the subamendment that's been proposed for all the reasons that Mr. Harris essentially said.

To add to that a bit, having the two-party requirement is already substantially beyond what applies to every other standing committee. That's number one.

Number two, when you are summoning a committee and the logistics involved in getting the letter together, it may be that there is a member who would support it but isn't able to sign it on short notice, or there may be a member who is more neutral on the question.

The requirement that you would need to have three parties agree before even calling a meeting seems a bit much to me. If you have two parties who say this merits an emergency meeting, then after they get together, other members who are maybe a little more on the fence can listen to the arguments. I think Mr. Bergeron's proposal here is very reasonable.

It's water in our wine, because it's a step back from what 106(4) says. I'm very happy to accept that amendment, but the subamendment is a bridge too far. It looks like you're trying to make it as hard as possible to call one of these emergency meetings. I think it is reasonable that there be a reasonable mechanism for those meetings to be called.

• (1415)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I hope we'll get to a discussion of future business and the work plan, but I do have to call for other comments.

Seeing none, we'll have a vote on Mr. Fragiskatos' motion to amend, which would propose that we require three parties.

Did I see Mr. Harris's hand up?

Mr. Jack Harris: Excuse me, Chair, but there is no translation.

The Chair: Oh. That was entirely my fault. I had it on the wrong button for translation. Excuse me. Thank you for that.

I would then go to a vote, seeing no further comments, on the motion to amend from Mr. Fragiskatos.

(Subamendment negatived [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Now we are back to Mr. Bergeron's motion.

Is there any further debate?

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

The Chair: That brings us back to the main motion as amended.

Is there any further debate on the main motion as amended?

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

The Chair: Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I'm at the committee's disposal in terms of how we proceed on this, but I think it's a good point to really start in terms of the discussion at the first meeting. We had some outstanding items and motions that had been adopted by the committee that were not proceeded with as a result of prorogation. Maybe it's worthwhile to have a general discussion first, but my suggestion is that now would be a good time to readopt motions that we had already adopted as a committee.

There were two motions—one with respect to Tibet and one with respect to certain witnesses, Mr. McCallum and Mr. Wright—that the committee had unanimously adopted. I would suggest we readopt them to just ensure their application going forward. We had also adopted a motion to do a report with respect to the situation in Hong Kong. We have to, I think, consider possible modifications to that motion, but I think we owe it to the work we did previously to readopt or in any event consider next steps with respect to these motions.

Maybe I'd open that up for discussion before putting anything specific on the table, but it's worth having a discussion about.

The Chair: Thank you.

I wonder if the clerk could advise us on whether, in the event the committee wished to, there is some simple way to accomplish what Mr. Genuis is talking about.

The Clerk: Absolutely. It's just readopting the same motions, essentially.

The Chair: Do you need to do it one at a time?

The Clerk: It would be preferable, especially since he mentioned there might be some amendments.

• (1420)

The Chair: I think that's helpful.

I have Mr. Harris, and then I'll see who else I see.

Mr. Jack Harris: Of course, the committee can do what it wishes. The committee has a different composition from the previous committee, so if motions are brought that were brought before, it's fair to say that members of the committee may wish to either comment or debate on them rather than just simply adopting them.

As has been pointed out, some of the motions were related to particular times and things like that. I think we need to be careful in trying to adopt them all at once. I think we have to take them one at a time and see whether there is a need for further discussion or debate, whether we can deal with that today or whether it's something that's.... I won't call it “perfunctory”; maybe it's just reiterating things we've already decided.

If there's agreement here, then we can do that. I would just be mindful that some of the things may require debate.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm not seeing anyone else wanting to comment.

Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: To simplify this, I'll start with putting on the table verbatim a motion that was previously adopted, and we can proceed with it or not, of course, as members wish. I move:

That Canada's former ambassadors to the People's Republic of China, the Honourable John McCallum and Robert Wright, be summoned to appear before the committee at a time, date and location to be determined by the chair and the clerk of the committee.

The Chair: Is there any debate?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, go ahead.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, I have no objection to the committee re-adopting this motion. However, I seem to recall discussions we had with our beloved previous clerk, and I think the two witnesses had signalled their interest in appearing before the committee. Adopting this motion again will certainly have the effect of keeping their interest in appearing before the committee.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: This is a question for you, Mr. Chair, but especially for the clerk. Do we have the ability to summon without an initial invite going to the individuals Mr. Genuis mentioned?

The Clerk: Even if the motion says “summon”, we usually start with an invitation and then if they refuse, we go on to other procedures.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Okay. I think that's something that needs to be kept in mind here, Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I wanted to check with respect to Mr. Wright. What I understood was that he declined due to reasons of being older and not feeling he had something to contribute. I'm wondering what the mover of the motion has in mind for Mr. Wright. I understand having McCallum, I get all that, but I'm wondering whether we are putting pressure on. I believe Mr. Wright is in his eighties and has not been an ambassador for several decades. I'm wondering what we're really trying to accomplish on that one.

Mr. Genuis has made the motion so he must know about Mr. Wright, his work and his age, and when he was actually the ambassador.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Just to emphasize, the motion that I put forward was to readopt the motion that the committee had previously adopted, so I wanted to, in moving the motion, be respectful of that precedent. I believe in the discussion that took place, I think the motion we had originally proposed was just having Mr. McCallum, and there was another member who wanted the inclusion of Mr. Wright.

In any event, I'm happy to remove the reference to Mr. Wright. I think it's particularly important that we hear from Mr. McCallum given how recently he was the ambassador and given how his engagement has so much bearing on current events before the committee.

I'm very open to a friendly amendment to remove the reference to Mr. Wright. I only put it in there because this motion is verbatim the one that was previously adopted. We can do something different; that's fine.

• (1425)

The Chair: Before I go to Mr. Harris, let me ask the committee: Is it agreed to withdraw the name of Mr. Wright?

No, Mr. Harris wishes to comment.

Mr. Jack Harris: I was only going to comment on Mr. Wright. I understand that we had been advised by the committee clerk that Mr. Wright initially declined the invitation. Then when the second request was made after the motion was passed by the committee, he did agree to attend, with the caveat that he wasn't really *au courant* with the situation in China, but if we wanted him he would come.

I don't have strong feelings one way or the other on Mr. Wright, but if he feels he has nothing to offer, and unless some members think that he does, I'm willing to listen to what people say.

The Chair: I know Madam Holke is with us. She's in support of the clerk today. However, my understanding was in fact that, as Peter described, Mr. Wright had indicated that he's older, he doesn't have a lot of memory of the time, and so forth. I think that was part of it, but it's up to the committee.

The Clerk: If I may just add, he did accept the invitation. He just wanted to make sure that it would be virtual.

The Chair: Was that Mr. Wright?

The Clerk: Yes. Both of them actually accepted to appear afterwards.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Bergeron.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to point out that that's precisely what I was saying earlier. Both had accepted the committee's invitation after receiving a more formal request to appear.

Since the clerk just clarified that a friendly invitation would be extended first and since the two signalled their interest in appearing, I repeat that re-adopting the motion, as it stood in the previous session of Parliament, will certainly go a long way towards retaining their interest in contributing to the committee's work.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Madam Clerk, can you just clarify for me? I think you said what the normal practice is. Is there anything that prevents the committee from summoning someone if, after a prorogation as we've had and a re-creation of the committee, it hasn't first invited them? I presume there is nothing, or is there?

The Clerk: At the moment, we are just readopting the motion, if the committee wishes to readopt it. I will proceed with an invitation first, and then if they both decline again or one of them declines, we'll get back to the committee and the committee can decide on further actions.

The Chair: Why would you do that if the committee is adopting a motion to summon them? Is it because there are rules that prevent you from summoning them before they've been first invited?

The Clerk: No, it's just our practice. Usually we just reinvite them, because it's a new committee, it's a new session and it's a new motion. The former summons is no longer in effect. Essentially, everything needs to be readopted.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, the motion that I put forward was, again, designed to be the same as the previous motion, which says that they would be summoned to appear before the committee at a time. I am very comfortable with the clerk following a procedure of inviting first and then following up with a summons if the invitation is....

What this motion says is that we are prepared to use the power of the committee to require these people to appear, but absolutely extend all courtesy that is possible in the context of that expectation.

The Chair: That might be very helpful to the committee. Are there any objections to following that approach? I don't see any. Can we carry on to the motion before us?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, I think you have some more motions.

• (1430)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes. This is also verbatim from before. It was adopted but not tabled in the House. The motion is as follows:

That this committee call for dialogue between representatives of the Tibetan people (His Holiness the Dalai Lama or his representatives and/or the Central Tibetan Administration) and the government of the People's Republic of China with a view to enabling Tibet to exercise genuine autonomy within the framework of the Chinese constitution, and report this motion to the House.

The Chair: Is there any debate? I see none.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and this—

The Chair: I'm sorry. I think Mr. Bergeron may have a point of order or something, if you don't mind.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I'm not quite sure this is a point of order, so let's just call it a reminder, Mr. Chair.

I want to reiterate something I've raised numerous times in the past: that the reports we produce on an interim basis be deemed interim reports by us, the committee members, since we've also agreed to revisit the specific issue of Tibet. I imagine Mr. Genuis is also going to be proposing a motion to resume the work or hear from other witnesses on Tibet.

The Chair: Thank you.

I think that was a clarification.

[*English*]

We can go back to Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Mr. Bergeron.

I don't recall the committee specifically and I wasn't able to find it in the minutes, but now that he's mentioning it, I am recalling that Mr. Harris had a previous motion with respect to hearing from officials on the issue of the situation in Tibet. I don't have that motion in front of me, unfortunately. I did look through the minutes of previous meetings to see what we adopted, but maybe it didn't appear there or maybe I just missed it. I wanted to go on to make some suggestions with respect to our study on Hong Kong. Maybe while I do that, Mr. Bergeron or Mr. Harris may want to see if they can find that information.

The Chair: I think I saw Mr. Harris mouthing that he does have it in front of him, if you want me to go to him now.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sure, let's do that.

Mr. Jack Harris: I do have it from the minutes. It's a motion by me that was passed by the committee. It said:

That the committee invite officials from Global Affairs Canada to provide a briefing on the situation in Tibet and Canada's relationship at the earliest opportunity as part of its ongoing study on Canada's relationship with China.

That was important to my support for the motion. The idea of reporting it to the House was basically an interim motion. Whether we should be reporting all this stuff to the House in the interim is a different question. We just passed the motion again, so we have it in front of us. It was also, from my point of view at least, contingent upon supporting the interim motion that we agreed to look further into this, because we had only heard from one person. We had

not heard from any of the other stakeholders, and we didn't really have a briefing as a committee on that point.

It was one of those surprise motions, shall we say, that needed some thought and consideration before the committee was ready to adopt it, but we did indeed adopt it and I have no hesitation in re-adopting it today, the first one. I think this one here is important, and if it is in order, Mr. Chair, perhaps I would put that forward now for the committee's approval as a re-adoption of that motion. If that's the case, let me move:

That the committee invite officials from Global Affairs Canada to provide a briefing on the situation in Tibet and Canada's relationship at the earliest opportunity as part of its ongoing study on Canada's relationship with China.

• (1435)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Any debate or comments on this motion? I see none.

(Motion agreed to)

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

Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There is now, in terms of concluding the business from the previous Parliament, the question of the Hong Kong study. Of course, the Hong Kong study is very important, and it's also fast moving. My suggestion would be that we bring that study to a conclusion and prepare a report as soon as is reasonably possible, because time has passed since our previous hearing.

That said, I would note that there are some people we particularly want to hear from first. In my mind, a key one is Minister Mendicino. We had talked about needing to dig further into the immigration aspect of it, and there had been interest in and agreement that we would hear from Minister Mendicino about the refugee dimension of that. Also, we should give an opportunity for our consul general in Hong Kong to appear, obviously virtually.

That could maybe be one more meeting and then, in the meantime, invite our analysts to begin the process of preparing a report so that we can apply the important testimony that we heard in August and share that with our colleagues in the House as quickly as possible.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That's not a motion. It's just a point of discussion to start us off on this section of it.

The Chair: That's fine.

[Translation]

Mr. Bergeron, go ahead.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I completely agree with what Mr. Genuis just proposed, but I do have two concerns. First, I would, once again, reiterate the importance of using the term “interim report” in reference to a report that could be tabled. As I've mentioned before, what's happening in Hong Kong necessarily has an impact on Taiwan, for instance, so it's important to keep in mind that global problems can't be boiled down to specific issues that will be reported on before a comprehensive report is tabled. It might be tabled before the end of the session, but it might not be. I think it's crucial that we use the term “interim” in reference to the committee's reports.

Second, I wanted to comment on what Mr. Genuis said. In terms of the work plan that the analysts had provided, I think everyone on the committee was on board. The motion should be to resume the study on the Canada-China relationship, according to the work plan provided by the analysts. Of course, I, too, recommend that we start with the study on the situation Hong Kong is facing right now.

The Chair: I think it's in order to propose that. Isn't that what you'd like to do?

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Exactly, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I believe the clerk thinks it's in order. Is that right? She's indicating her agreement.

Very good. Thank you.

Are there any comments?

Mr. Harris, it's over to you.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

Yes, I agree that we have a work plan that was adopted. I know there are several new members on our committee, and they might make a little effort to go and have a look at it. There may be some proposed changes in that work plan, but that's something that perhaps the subcommittee can look at.

Today, we're dealing with some complexities, of course. The idea of an interim report on Hong Kong was probably agreed to. We moved into that study because of the urgent nature of things that were happening in Hong Kong. That is why we wanted to get the committee back together again, and why it was ultimately agreed to. The events in Hong Kong were extremely important, and still are. It's a moving target, as Mr. Genuis has pointed out. We did diligent work on the Hong Kong study. We didn't quite finish it.

I don't know whether one meeting will be enough. I would suggest that should be discussed at the subcommittee along with the scheduling issue. We just agreed to deal with Tibet as soon as it is practical. That's a scheduling issue. The idea of the general agreement of going by the work plan is a good starting point. I had a brief look at it today, and it seems to me that we had a lot of work done by the committee, the subcommittee and the analysts in preparing a work plan. We may need to make adjustments to it, add

different witnesses or whatever. Depending on availability, it may be totally different,

I am in agreement with Mr. Bergeron's motion. The notion that we complete the work on Hong Kong as soon as it is practical going forward can be incorporated. I don't know if it's excluded by Mr. Bergeron's motion, because the work plan was there when we embarked on the Hong Kong study. Perhaps the details can be more readily dealt with by the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure. That's inherent in the positive support for Mr. Bergeron's motion.

• (1440)

The Chair: Mr. Genuis is next.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I am very much in agreement with that. I'm persuaded about the value of proceeding in that fashion. As others have said, as long as there's a consensus that we're working toward an interim report on the situation in Hong Kong, and that our analysts will begin that process.... I don't know if we need to formally say this, but that interim report will reflect evidence that has been going in the previous session as well as the new evidence that we're going to hear.

Just to further inform the discussion, I wonder if you, Madam Clerk, could share with us, based on the work plan.... If I recall, we had scheduled four or five meetings, and we did three of them. Could you just refresh us on where those...? If we were to proceed exactly according to the work plan, and take into consideration witness availability, how many more meetings, which witnesses and what would that involve?

The Clerk: I would turn to the analysts for that, because they have more information about the work plan and all of that.

The Chair: Ms. Goody, please go ahead.

Ms. Allison Goody (Committee Researcher): Hello again, everyone.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The committee had envisioned approximately four to six meetings. It would depend, of course, on the scheduling availability of certain witnesses. The decision was to have some flexibility there, and three full meetings were completed at the time.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Just to follow up on that, could you give us a sense of...? I believe that Minister Mendicino and the consul general were already on that work plan for prospective meetings as well.

Ms. Allison Goody: Yes.

A meeting was envisioned for August 25 with a full slate of witnesses, but that meeting was cancelled. In addition to that, the individuals you mentioned were discussed as the priorities for the final meetings. There was the meeting with the remainder of the academics and other witnesses, and you had discussed having the minister and the consul general after that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: This is my final comment, Mr. Chair, before I wrap up. As long as we're operating under the understanding that we're going to complete the Hong Kong study in the previously envisioned amount of time, according to the previously envisioned work plan, and then proceed with an interim report based on that, as discussed, I'm very supportive of proceeding in that fashion.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before I go to Mr. Harris and Mr. Bergeron, I want to check with the clerk on what the procedure is for us. If the committee wishes to, does it need to adopt the previous testimony on these topics?

The Clerk: No, that was all covered by the motion that was adopted in the House on September 23. All evidence and all documents that were presented to the committee in the last session will carry over, so that's already been dealt with.

The Chair: That's very helpful. Thank you very much.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: I'd like to add to what was provided by the analyst. I'm looking at something in front of me that proposed nine meetings beyond the date on which the House was closed down because of the COVID situation, with a priority for future meetings listed as well. There are four items. I think there was a fairly robust work schedule that was not completed, and I see that only one or two of the witnesses listed here have actually testified to date. We may have to revisit some of that, but there is quite a hefty schedule here that still applies.

I may be corrected by our analyst, but I'm looking at the February 27 report. The eventual one was adopted on March 9, which I don't have in front of me. Maybe not all of this was adopted. Maybe it was just the first parts of it, but a fairly large document was prepared for what the work of the committee might be. I believe it's in order, given the passage of time, for the subcommittee to look at this and come back with recommendations for the full committee.

• (1445)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: The analyst raised her hand.

Mr. Bergeron, I'd like to have the analyst respond to Mr. Harris's comment.

Ms. Goody, the floor is yours.

Ms. Allison Goody: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Harris, you are correct. There were two separate work plans that the committee considered and adopted. There is the larger work plan on the global study that the committee is undertaking, with the date that you mentioned. As you correctly stated, there's quite a bit left on that document to still undertake. Then there is the specific

work plan on the Hong Kong meetings that the committee had been working its way through as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, over to you.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I have nothing to add to what Mr. Harris just said. I only want to clarify one thing.

Mr. Genuis referred to the consul general issue, and our analyst confirmed this. We had a discussion because there was a proposal to invite the consul general from Vancouver, I believe. I said that the consul general from Montreal had also made comments and that, as a result, rather than inviting the consul general from Vancouver, Toronto or Montreal, it might be better to invite the ambassador of the People's Republic of China. We agreed to invite the ambassador of the People's Republic of China, who incidentally expressed an interest in meeting, in one form or another, with the committee members.

I suggest that we meet with the ambassador of the People's Republic of China instead.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is that a motion, Mr. Bergeron?

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I don't know whether it's necessary to move a motion, since we agreed to meet with the ambassador of China instead.

I just wanted to refer again to our discussion where we spoke about leaving out such and such a consul and focusing first and foremost on the ambassador of the People's Republic of China. As I was saying, he expressed an interest in meeting with us in one form or another.

The Chair: Yes. I remember it well.

[*English*]

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to add a different point in relation to our going forward.

Mr. Genuis suggested that the analysts be asked to start preparing a report on Hong Kong. I would say that such an item is premature, keeping in mind that it's an interim report and we're probably only talking about things that might be important for the government to do or to recommend for today and that the larger questions may be left until the end.

Perhaps it has already been done—but maybe it didn't happen because of prorogation and the committee didn't exist—but perhaps we can ask if the analysts are able to provide, or work on at least, a summary of the evidence so that we can have something to review. Particularly, there are new members on the committee. I wouldn't want them to have to read through the entire transcripts of all of the meetings that we've had. I think that would be a bit onerous. Since we are bringing forth the evidence—the evidence is before us—if there were a summary of it from the analysts for the use of the full committee, that might make the process move along a little more quickly and smoothly.

Given the fact that there's a constituency week coming up, if that process were started now, that would at least save us a week of waiting or a week before we ask such a question. That's up to the chair and the committee to advise, of course. If that's compatible with the analysts' work schedule, then that would be great.

• (1450)

The Chair: Before I go to Mr. Genuis and then Mr. Oliphant, I'll ask the analyst.

Allison, would I be mistaken to think that you'll probably do that as we go along, and that it may exist and be available for members in fairly short order so that members could review it?

Ms. Allison Goody: An evidence summary has been prepared and has been sent to the clerk, if it is the committee's will to have it distributed.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Is there any debate on the idea of having it distributed? Is it agreed that we have it distributed?

It's agreed. I'll direct the clerk to distribute it, and then I'll go to Mr. Genuis and then Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you. I just want to quickly—

Mr. John Williamson: I have a point of order.

With regard to the distribution, is that considered an internal document? Can we just clarify that? I assume it is.

The Chair: In my view, it is considered an internal document, so I'd ask the members to keep it in confidence, yes.

Thank you.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I just want to briefly clarify two points that were raised.

In terms of Mr. Bergeron's latest intervention—and I'm sorry if I wasn't clear about this—what I had meant to refer to was having the consul general of Canada to Hong Kong, our representative in Hong Kong. That was a separate discussion from inviting a representative of the PRC in Canada, which I agree is also worthwhile, and I agree that the appropriate person to extend that invitation to would be the ambassador.

Mr. Harris was talking about, essentially, the two different work plans. I definitely think we should be guided by the work plan with respect to the Hong Kong study in particular in the short term as we complete the Hong Kong study. The longer-term work plan will

probably be something we want to revisit in the subcommittee and have a wider conversation about, recognizing that a lot has changed, that there's a lot new in the context of the relationship between Canada and China since we previously discussed that work plan: all of the circumstances around COVID-19, around.... I don't need to list them; everybody knows. A lot has changed. I'm not saying that we might not want to be guided to some extent by that as well, but what I was proposing in particular is the Hong Kong work plan and that we use that as a guide for the Hong Kong study, but then maybe have a separate conversation at the subcommittee about the global work plan.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I note for posterity that I agree with Garnett on this.

I have two points.

As a federal Parliament, our most appropriate invitation would be to China's ambassador to Canada, not a consul general. If the ambassador wanted to include one of his consuls general from Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver or wherever, that would be fine. I want to make sure that we are on the same page on that. I am also supportive of having Canada's consul general to Hong Kong.

The second point is that I think it's appropriate to finish our work plan on Hong Kong. I think we then need to have a subcommittee on agenda and planning look at what we do after that. There are important issues around world events, COVID and security, etc., and we need to rejig that a bit. If this means the subcommittee needs to do a little extra work so that we don't lose too much time, I think we'd all agree to that.

I just don't want to assume we're back exactly where we were before, when we were finishing the Hong Kong report.

The Chair: I don't think we have any motions before us. We've had a discussion about where to go from here. We have a pretty clear direction, I think.

I see Mr. Genuis raising his hand.

• (1455)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: The next matter, which is when we want to have our meetings again, is another thing I think we need to discuss. I'm bringing this up on the assumption that we've already established a path forward vis-à-vis the Hong Kong study. I think we have. Is that right?

The Chair: That's my impression.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: All right.

The Chair: I see Mr. Bergeron wishing to intervene on this.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, unless I'm mistaken, I believe that I proposed—and the clerk agreed—that we restart the work as set out in the work plan submitted by the analysts, beginning with the specific situation in Hong Kong.

The Chair: Thank you for reminding me. You're right.

Are there any other comments on this motion?

Those in favour of the motion raise their hands.

[*English*]

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Chair, I did have my hand up.

I think the implication of Mr. Bergeron's motion is that both work plans go to the subcommittee, so that the scheduling or whatever fixes may need to be done can be done there instead of just adopting the existing work plans.

Is that inherent in your motion, Mr. Bergeron?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I believe that, for the details, a subcommittee meeting will be necessary. This brings me to the question of whether a motion is needed to establish the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure.

The Chair: Wasn't this one of the routine motions at the start?

The clerk says that this has already been done.

The Clerk: That's right. This has already been done.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: That's fine then!

The Chair: Okay.

[*English*]

Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I propose that instead of going back to the subcommittee specifically on the Hong Kong study, we leave it to the discretion of the chair to seek to schedule as soon as possible the witnesses we had already proposed. I think this is the most expeditious way of moving forward on that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: Sorry, I'm objecting to that. The study was there, but it was over a month and a half ago. Mr. Genuis wants to have one more meeting. I don't know what witnesses were left. I think we should have a look at it to see whether we need one meeting or two, or whether we need new witnesses.

We've put a considerable effort put into this. We're going to have a summary of evidence. If there are pieces missing that need to be added, then I think we should have an opportunity to add them.

This is a new committee. If we want to be ironclad with the previous work plan, then that's the committee's wish. However, I think it makes sense for us to assess how far we've come, make sure we're not leaving anything out and make a decision in the subcommittee.

The chair can go ahead. We have a meeting coming up. Whenever it's decided that we're allowed to meet, then surely we can continue with some of the witnesses who are available. I don't think we need to foreclose any possibility of adjustments to that committee.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Oliphant, I see your hand up.

However, before I go to Mr. Oliphant, did I cut you off, Mr. Genuis?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: No, no, that's fine. We can proceed in the fashion that Mr. Harris proposed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: Sorry, we're at the end of our time.

However, I think we're clear here. I don't want to summarize, for fear of getting it wrong—and I may have to go to the clerk to get the summary afterwards—but I think we need to have a subcommittee meeting soon, and we need to work towards the next meeting of the full committee on the subject of Hong Kong.

• (1500)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I was wondering whether we should discuss how we want to meet. Obviously, we're running out of time. Do we want to continue to meet virtually or do we want to meet in a hybrid way?

I gather that, for various reasons, some members of our committee, such as Mr. Harris, may wish to continue working virtually for a while. However, perhaps we could allow some of our committee members to meet in person again. In that case, we could have hybrid meetings. I believe that we're technically able to organize hybrid meetings that ensure social distancing between the members present and that enable the other members to participate virtually.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Clerk, is there anything preventing the committee members from doing this?

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris: We can't hear you.

[Translation]

The Chair: I assume that, at this time, the meetings are only being held virtually.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris: We're not hearing anything.

[Translation]

The Chair: There's no one in the meeting rooms of the House committees.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I don't think that there's any English interpretation.

The Chair: Does the interpretation work in English?

[English]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Switch to French.

Mr. Jack Harris: I'm hearing it in bits and pieces.

The Chair: I can switch to English, but let's see if Mr. Bergeron is getting the French.

The French translation is working.

Okay, I guess I'll go on in English, although we need to have the interpretation of both languages working, of course.

Where was I?

The Clerk: On hybrid meetings.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

What is the situation in relation to that, Madam Clerk? Has a rule of some sort been set by the House? Where are we?

The Clerk: We're looking at the motion that was adopted on September 23, which states that the first meeting had to be virtual but that there then would be hybrid meetings. It's really the choice of the members. The member can come in person if they want to—that's totally acceptable—or also virtually as well. We'll have the two options.

The only thing is that if you would like to have some food or anything, please let me know in advance if you'll be there in person so I can take care of that.

Other than that, it's really up to the member.

[Translation]

The Chair: I hope that the interpretation is working now.

I think that Mr. Bergeron's question has been properly addressed.

Mr. Harris, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

Maybe the clerk can help us with this. Whether we're having a virtual meeting or a hybrid meeting, does that make any difference with respect to the scheduling? Is one easier than the other, or are they on the same footing in terms of there being no constriction on our time if we're using one or the other?

Do you understand my question?

The Clerk: Yes.

Mr. Jack Harris: Does it limit our flexibility if we choose one versus the other?

The Clerk: Basically, at the moment only four committees can sit at a time, even if it's hybrid or all virtual, because both meetings need to have a Zoom link and all the tech requirements and all of that.

The Chair: I can tell you that for those of us in Atlantic Canada, and there are three of us, Mr. Harris, Ms. Zann and me—

Mr. John Williamson: And me.

The Chair: Yes, and Mr. Williamson, pardon me.

Some may go to Ottawa and come back. I don't know if this is the case for all four provinces, but certainly in my province when you come back you have to self-isolate for 14 days; Mr. Harris also.

Is that also the case in New Brunswick, Mr. Williamson?

Mr. John Williamson: It's not legally, but I came back after the caucus meeting and was aware every day of those 14 days that I was out that it would be a bad political move to spread COVID. When I return next time, I'm going to self-monitor and stay close to home. I will allow myself to walk my dog off my property, because I live on a quiet street with no other homes.

So technically, no, but politically, yes. How's that for an answer?

• (1505)

The Chair: Okay. That's fine. That's very helpful.

At any rate, you can see there are certain constraints because of that, so I expect that some of us will continue to wish to do the hybrid model. We now know how this can work.

With that, I don't see anything else....

Hopefully, we're going to close in a moment, but first, Mr. Paul-Hus, it's your turn.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't want to be rude. We've taken a long time to sort out a number of small procedures. However, I wanted to table a motion so that it could be sent to the committee quickly. I think that the motion can be addressed in a matter of minutes. Can I table it?

The Chair: You can table it.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: The motion reads as follows: "That the committee study the national security issues related to its mandate for four or five meetings, including, but not limited to, cybersecurity and the threat of foreign influence, and that the committee report its findings to the House."

The motion concerns the future, when we'll have completed the work in progress. Its purpose is to ensure that we work quickly in connection with the motion in place in our committee concerning everything related to cybersecurity, national security and the influence of the Chinese communist regime on Canada. I think that this is part of what we must do as quickly as possible.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Paul-Hus.

We don't really have time to discuss this motion right now. I can see that Mr. Bergeron wants to make a comment. I'll give the floor to Mr. Bergeron. You understand that we must end this meeting fairly quickly.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: In the work plan on the study of Canada's relationship with China, part of our work must address the security issue. As a result, if we don't have time to adopt the formal motion today, I want to reassure Mr. Paul-Hus that it doesn't mean that the issue isn't important. The issue is already included in the work plan that we agreed on a few moments ago.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll still ask the committee members whether they have any objections to the motion. If they want to discuss the motion, I think that they'll need to wait until the next meeting. I can see that Mr. Harris wants to speak. After Mr. Harris, I'll ask the committee members whether they want to adopt the motion. If they want to discuss the motion, I think that they'll need to wait.

[*English*]

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: I would think it would require some debate of elements of the motion in terms of what we would do, when we would do it and all of that. I think this is something I agree with Mr. Bergeron on, as it's already in the work plan, but he is basically setting an agenda item as to what will happen next. I don't think that's something we should.... We would need a debate on that.

If that's the will of the committee, obviously we will go from the study Hong Kong to his study, but we do have a work plan. I think adjustments to that would either have to be debated or at least discussed at the agenda and procedures committee before I personally would be ready to adopt it. There's nothing wrong with the content, but there are several items there. He's talking about the Communist Party, but the Chinese government's influence on Canada is on our agenda; security is; cybersecurity is. It will be part of our overall study, but the timing of it and all of that are matters for debate and discussion.

I would suggest that such a motion be sent to the committee for consideration.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to point out to Mr. Harris that the comments that I added after tabling the motion, when I spoke of the Chinese communist regime, aren't included in the motion.

My motion is fairly general. We should simply adopt it. The subcommittee can then analyze the motion and go further, since the motion doesn't focus specifically on a series of points. Above all, the motion concerns cybersecurity and national security.

The Chair: Are there any objections to what we're expecting and discussing at the next meeting?

• (1510)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I wonder if you could just clarify the process around that. Is it that you would the meeting and then we would resume consideration of the motion when we resume as a committee, or do we have to dispose of it in some way before you adjourn? What's the process? I'm just trying to understand.

The Chair: My problem is that I know we have limits on how long we have the Zoom call, and I'm afraid it's about to expire momentarily. We're going to run out of time, so we can't continue on an unlimited basis. We're beyond the two hours. I'm therefore trying to do this with agreement. I think it's hard for us to go on debating this because of the time not being allowed. Therefore what I'm proposing is that this motion come back to the committee for discussion when we reunite, having in mind, of course, that the subcommittee will probably have this topic and the fact that it's been proposed in its mind when it meets.

Does that help, Mr. Genuis?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes, I understand where we're going on it. I guess it's a question of whether people are prepared to support it now. If not, then we obviously can't bend on that.

Mr. Jack Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, is it possible for us to refer the motion to the subcommittee on agenda and procedure for discussion and recommendation, or is that out of order?

The Chair: Let me ask the clerk if that's out of order.

The Clerk: Now, because of a matter of time, I'm wondering if it's a motion to adjourn that you're trying to make, and that the matter be referred to the subcommittee, because the motion can also be moved at subcommittee.

The Chair: You're telling us that we're out of time.

Mr. Harris, is that what you have in mind?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: I want to tell the committee that there's no time limit for the Zoom call. The committee decides when we should finish up our work. It's not that I want to go on forever. I just wanted to make a clarification. We don't have time limits and, if we do, this matter should be reviewed.

The Chair: Thank you.

However, if you speak with the whip, I think that you'll learn that there are limits.

[*English*]

Mr. Harris, you heard what the clerk had to say. Are you proposing a motion to adjourn, with this motion being referred to the subcommittee?

Mr. Jack Harris: Well now, let me see. I don't want to insult Mr. Paul-Hus. If he wants the full committee to debate this, then the full committee can debate it. But in light of what Mr. Bergeron had to say and my awareness of what's on the committee's agenda, it's a question of what priority would be given to this. I would prefer to have the agenda and procedure subcommittee, where all parties here are represented, have an opportunity to consider whether we would give a priority to that as a group and make a recommendation, or at least take it into consideration before the full committee makes a decision. That's my preference. But I don't want to insult Mr. Paul-Hus.

I didn't think we were setting priorities here today, frankly. Aside from things that had already been dealt with by the committee with regard to Hong Kong and the passing of those motions, this is essentially new business for today. On that basis, I'd prefer to have it go to the subcommittee first.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

I think that I saw hands raised, first Mr. Bergeron's hand, then Mr. Oliphant's hand, and lastly Mr. Fragiskatos' hand.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I was just about to suggest that you ask whether there are any more comments on the motion, but I can see that there are more comments. As a result, the solution—which may not be the ideal solution, but rather the most appropriate solution under the circumstances—would be to adjourn the meeting and discuss the motion tabled by Mr. Paul-Hus at the earliest opportunity, either at the subcommittee or committee level.

The Chair: Is this a motion to adjourn, Mr. Bergeron?

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, once again, I don't want it to seem like I'm ignoring the motion tabled by Mr. Paul-Hus. I was quite willing to adopt the motion as it stands today. However, since there appears to be more comments and we're running out of time to hear them, I move that we adjourn the meeting. The motion tabled by Mr. Paul-Hus could be addressed first thing at the next committee or subcommittee meeting.

• (1515)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

[*English*]

The motion is not debatable, so I must put it to the committee now.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much, and we look forward to seeing you soon.

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