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Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Tuesday, October 13, 2020

Chair: Ms. Marilyn Gladu



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• (1110)

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Stephanie Bond): Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum. I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions or entertain points of order or participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the official opposition. I am now ready to receive motions for the chair.

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): I'm nominating Marilyn Gladu to be the chair.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): I second the motion.

The Clerk: Are there any further motions? Seeing none, I declare the motion carried and Ms. Gladu duly elected chair of the committee. Congratulations.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Is it the pleasure of the committee for me to continue on with the election of the first vice-chair?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Clerk: Wonderful. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the government party. I am now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

Monsieur Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Clerk.

I would like to nominate our honourable colleague, Ms. Sidhu, please.

The Clerk: Are there any further motions? Seeing none, I declare the motion carried and Ms. Sidhu elected as first vice-chair of the committee. Congratulations.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition. I am now prepared to receive motions for the second vice-chair.

Mr. Serré.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Madam Clerk.

I'd like to nominate the honourable member from the Bloc Québécois, Ms. Larouche, as second vice-chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Serré that Ms. Larouche be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

[*English*]

Are there any other motions?

[*Translation*]

I declare the motion carried and Ms. Larouche duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

The Clerk: Now, I will invite Madam Gladu to take the chair.

The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)): Thank you so much to the clerk.

[*Translation*]

Thank you all.

Congratulations, Ms. Larouche. Welcome.

[*English*]

Thank you so much. It is an honour to be the chair of the committee. As you know, I was previously chair but never on Zoom. We will learn together.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Chair, I'd like to say something.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, Madame Larouche.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I just want to let the committee members know that I have some notices of motion. I plan to have my assistant, Arnaud Brubacher, send them to the clerk so they can be distributed to the committee members.

The Clerk: Thank you. Once we've dealt with the routine motions, I'll send the motions I've received to all committee members.

[English]

The Chair: Very good. As you may be aware, in the past these were read sequentially. If it is the will of the committee, I will proceed to read through all of the standard motions that need to be passed. We'll offer for each an opportunity for discussion, and then we will vote yes or no.

The first one is for analysts services:

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.

Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The second resolution relates to 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.

Is there discussion?

Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): I would like to add the word “recognized”, so that it would read, “one member from each recognized” party.

• (1115)

The Clerk: With the committee's permission, I can circulate Ms. Mathysen's suggestion. Is everyone in agreement? Yes?

I will send that now to your P9 accounts.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on that particular resolution?

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: The next motion 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 (4) members are present, including one member of the opposition and one member of the government; but that when travelling outside the Parliamentary precinct, that the meeting begin after 15 minutes, regardless of members present.

Is there discussion?

Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I would like changes to be made. Instead of it “including one member of the opposition and one member of the government”, I would like it to read, “including two members of the opposition and two members of the government”.

The Chair: Is there further discussion?

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: The next motion is on the time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses:

That witnesses be given ten (10) minutes for their opening statement; 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 (5) minutes, Bloc Québécois, two and a half (2.5) minutes, New Democratic Party, two and a half (2.5) minutes.

Is there discussion?

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Sorry, Madam Chair.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Yes, Ms. Larouche?

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: On the motion that was just moved, is it possible to give the Bloc Québécois its turn in the middle of the second round so that it has an opportunity to speak during the second round?

[English]

The Chair: My understanding is that this is the standard preferred by the PROC committee. That's where the recommendation was initiated, and this committee has the ability to change it however it would like.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I should mention that the amendment comes from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[English]

The Chair: Please go ahead, Ms. Larouche.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I'd like to move the amendment that comes from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I'm referring to the new motion that was adopted, not to the standard version.

[English]

The Clerk: I believe Ms. Mathysen may have had her hand up.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Yes, Madam Chair, I thought I had the floor. Do I have the floor now?

The Chair: Yes, please go ahead.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: There have been changes made by the PROC committee, so I would like to make the following suggestions, so that the motion would read:

That witnesses be given five (5) minutes for their opening statement; that whenever possible, witnesses provide the committee with their opening statements 72 hours in advance; 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, Bloc Québécois, two and a half (2.5) minutes, New Democratic Party, two and a half (2.5) minutes, Conservative Party, five (5) minutes, Liberal Party, five (5) minutes.

The Chair: Excellent. That is the amended motion. Basically, it would provide less time for the witnesses at the start—five minutes instead of 10. It would also require their opening statements 72 hours in advance so that we'd have a chance to look at them. Round one would remain the same, with six minutes each; and then the order of the second round would change, but the time allocations would remain the same: Conservative, Liberal, Bloc Québécois, NDP, Conservative, Liberal.

Is there any further discussion on the amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: The next one is the motion regarding document distribution:

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.

Is there discussion on this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one has to do with working meals, my favourite subject:

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

Is there discussion on this motion?

Ms. Hutchings.

• (1120)

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.): It's nice to add a little humour, Madam Chair.

Congratulations on being chair. I know you're going to do a great job, Marilyn.

We'd better order weeks in advance because we have meals to deliver on the east coast and we have meals to deliver on the west coast. Because of the fact that we are meeting by Zoom, I think we can just park this one for now, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

According to the changes made at PROC, at the end of the original motion, the following words were added, "provided the member has confirmed their presence for the meeting." If we decide to have in-person meetings or hybrid meetings, that change could also be specified within our motion. I'd like to move that change.

The Chair: I think that's an excellent amendment because it does then say that, if people have said they're coming to Ottawa, then there can be meals organized.

Is there any other discussion?

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: The next motion is on travel, accommodation and the 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, and that video conference services be used [wherever] possible.

Is there any discussion on this motion?

As the chair, I have a question, and maybe the clerk can answer it. In this time of COVID, if we're going to be having hybrid meetings where most of us will be on Zoom, it would be my preference that witnesses also appear on Zoom. Even though it doesn't expressly say that in the motion, is that allowed, or is that something we should amend in the motion?

The Clerk: It is understood that witnesses will only be allowed to participate virtually.

The Chair: Excellent. Is there any further discussion on this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We're just flying through these. The next one is on access to in camera meetings:

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

Is there discussion on this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one is—

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Chair, can I speak on this next one, please?

The Chair: Absolutely. I will read it first. It is with regard to 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.

Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Chair, I thought that we were at the next item. I'll put my name on the list for the next item on the agenda.

I apologize for that, Madam Chair.

The Chair: There's no problem; you're good for that one.

Is there any discussion on the motion on the transcripts of in camera meetings?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Here we come to notice of motions:

That a 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. 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 hour, and that (3) notices received after the deadline hour or on nonbusiness 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.

Go ahead, Monsieur Serré.

• (1125)

Mr. Marc Serré: Sorry, Madam Chair, for not being clear. I thought we were moving to the next item on the agenda about the study, I apologize.

The Chair: Okay, that's no problem; it's my misunderstanding.

This one is about giving notice of orders of motion. It basically says that if we're talking about something and the motion has to do with what we're talking about, then it can be entertained. Otherwise, it must be given 48 hours' notice. We can't do it if we're going to travel, but don't worry, because we're probably not going to travel.

Is there any discussion on the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next motion is on orders of reference from the House respecting bills:

That, in relation to orders of reference from the House respecting Bills, (a) the clerk of the committee shall, upon the committee receiving such an order of reference, write to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee to invite those members to file with the clerk of the committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the Bill, which is the subject of the said order, which they would suggest that the committee consider; (b) suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a), at least 48 hours prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill to which the amendments relate shall be deemed to be proposed during the said consideration, provided that the committee may, by motion, vary this deadline in respect of a given Bill; and (c) during the clause-by-clause consideration of a Bill, the Chair shall allow a member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

Is there any discussion on this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: There is another routine motion, this one on other in camera meetings:

That any motion to go in camera should be debatable and amendable, and that the committee may only meet in camera for the following purposes: (a) to discuss administrative matters of the committee, including the selection and consideration of witnesses; (b) a draft report; (c) briefings concerning national security; (d) to ensure the protection of privacy of individuals; And furthermore, minutes of in camera meetings should reflect on the results of all votes taken by the committee while in camera, including how each member voted when a recorded vote is requested.

Is there any discussion on this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Very good, now we are finished with the routine motions.

Monsieur Serré, I believe you had a topic to raise.

Ms. Sidhu.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want clarification. It's the same motion, but I would like to add one point: That the committee may meet in camera only for the following purposes: (a) to consider a draft report; (b) to attend briefings concerning national security; (c) to consider lists of witnesses; (d) for any other reason with unanimous consent of the committee; that all votes taken in camera, with the exception of votes regarding the consideration of draft reports, be recorded within the minutes of proceedings, including how each member voted when recorded votes are requested; that any motion to sit in camera is debatable and amendable.

The Chair: This is an amendment to what we just voted on, so I think we—

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: This is a routine motion added on.

The Chair: Let me refer to the clerk. We just voted on what we were going to allow for in in camera voting. Can we amend the motion that we already voted on, or do we have to put it as a separate one?

The Clerk: It appears to me that this is the same content. However, there is an addition that Ms. Sidhu wishes to add. I did hear her add a section on considering motions at the discretion of the committee.

Is that what you're saying, Ms. Sidhu? You wanted to make an amendment in that respect?

• (1130)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Yes, you can do that. It's just a routine motion.

The Chair: You're comfortable with our adding that to the existing one we just voted on?

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Yes.

The Chair: Is everybody comfortable with that in the committee? Okay. Very good.

All in favour?

(Amendment agreed to)

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

The Chair: Monsieur Serré, finally we go to you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is my first time speaking on the committee. Congratulations. A few years ago, I was on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women when you were the chair. I know the great work you've done in the past, and we'll continue to do good work together. Thank you and welcome.

I hope there will be consensus on my motion to carry on the work we began via Zoom. We need to support women in these tough times as we deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

I will read my motion. I sent a copy to the clerk.

[English]

The motion reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), and notwithstanding the committee's completion of a previous study on the impacts to COVID-19 on women in Canada, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women re-establish a study on the impact of COVID-19 on women; that the study focus on those fleeing domestic violence, on women's participation in the economy and on women in the care economy and the measure the Government has taken in response; that the committee report its findings to the House; and that the committee request a Government response to its report

The Chair: Very good.

Is there discussion on this motion?

Ms. Wong.

Hon. Alice Wong: I remember that before we broke for prorogation we did a study on the impact of COVID on senior women. That part has already been done. I think we need to look at that part first to see the impact and what has been done. I don't want to do a study that duplicates what has already been done. This is just for the attention of the whole committee, especially for those who have just joined us. We did do a study and we did have a report. The follow-up hasn't really been done.

I just wanted to bring this to the attention of the new committee members right now.

The Chair: I think it's an excellent point, Ms. Wong.

My understanding is that you did not, in the previous one, actually get the report issued or the letter issued to the minister at the time. It may be possible to amend Monsieur Serré's motion to add to it the inclusion of testimony received before.

Ms. Larouche.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I already mentioned that I had motions to send to the clerk for the committee's consideration. One of them is similar to the one we just heard. I propose that we move all of our motions today and that we refer them to the subcommittee to determine how they can be combined and prioritized.

Like Mr. Serré, I was on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women this summer. We had agreed that we would send a letter to the minister and that we would conduct a study and table a more comprehensive report once Parliament resumed in the fall. Ms. Wong explained that another report was done, but we'll have to review it given that a number of us have similar motions. We'll need to take the time to go through them and figure out what can be combined.

• (1135)

[English]

The Clerk: I'll just interject here. I can confirm that we did not send the letter to the minister; nor did we present a report. Perhaps you would like to take a look at Madame Larouche's motion, which has just been distributed. I believe it will cover what Mr. Serré mentioned as well.

The Chair: Did you just send it to our P9s?

The Clerk: Yes, I did.

The Chair: I'll go look quickly.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Are you asking whether the motion was sent via the personal accounts?

[English]

The Chair: Yes. I just wanted to know because I was a little confused. I thought Ms. Larouche was talking about the same motion that Mr. Serré had raised, which is what we were discussing. However, in the motions that were sent, there are additional motions, so my question is whether it is the will of the committee to—

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Madam Chair, I can read my motion, which reiterates the idea that we submit our motions to the clerk so they can be referred to the subcommittee. The subcommittee members could then prioritize them.

The motion reads as follows:

That the Committee resume and complete its study on the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic on women, which it undertook during the 1st Session of the 43rd Parliament, and that the evidence and documentation the committee received at that time be considered by the committee during the current session; that the committee report—

[English]

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms. Larouche, but could you read it more slowly? The interpreter is having some difficulty.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: All right. I'll read more slowly.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I move as follows:

That the Committee resume and complete its study on the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic on women, which it undertook during the 1st Session of the 43rd Parliament, and that the evidence and documentation the committee received at that time be considered by the committee during the current session; that the committee report its recommendations to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Serré, you may go ahead.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Madam Chair.

What Ms. Larouche is proposing is similar to what Ms. Wong and I mentioned.

If everyone is in agreement, the subcommittee could examine it. Having all of our motions referred to the subcommittee is a good idea, provided that all the parties are able to submit their motions at a time that works for you, Madam Chair. The subcommittee can study and prioritize them, before they go back to the committee. It's a bit challenging to do it via Zoom.

I'm not sure whether there is agreement from the other members to have the subcommittee deal with all of that.

[English]

The Chair: I think this is a very good suggestion, so I'll ask, if the committee is good with this, that everybody send their motions, both on the subject we were studying and the subjects that you may want to study, to the clerk by this Friday. Then we would set a subcommittee meeting for Tuesday, October 20, at 11 o'clock, to look at the motions and sort through them, consolidate where necessary and bring forward a list of priorities to the committee on the 22nd for us to consider and set our work in order.

Ms. Mathysen.

• (1140)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We did a lot of this work already, and it never actually came to fruition.

As I understood it, before COVID hit we had a set plan that laid out a number of studies that we had agreed to and that we came together as an entire committee to discuss. While I entirely agree with moving forward on a continuation of the study of the impacts of COVID on women, and a completion of that lengthened study—that would be great, and to discuss it in subcommittee would be fine—we could also potentially ask the clerk, or possibly outline what the committee had already decided.

I am certainly happy to resubmit all of those same motions, but also say what the plan was, so that we understand that after we complete the study on COVID, we move forward in that same vein.

The Chair: It's a very good suggestion for the clerk to add what was on the schedule before for the Status of Women to study—and if there was an agreed priority—to the list of motions that people are bringing, plus the one that we're discussing. We can share that with all the committee members, some of whom are new. That way, when we come together, the subcommittee can do the initial hashing it out to see if we agree that the path we were on is the right one, or whether there are some new ideas or new circumstances that we want to inject in. Then it can come with a recommendation for the committee to consider.

Go ahead Ms. Hutchings.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, I know that the clerk will circulate it, but for your reference, the motions we agreed on in the last session were the impact of rural women, diversity in senior decision makers, cyber-bullying, human trafficking and non-traditional workplaces.

Madam Chair, I noticed your comment referencing the meetings next week, but I don't think the schedule has been determined yet for ongoing meetings other than this one. The opposition whip, our whip and the House administration clerks all need to agree. I am just putting it forth for you, my friend.

The Chair: That's a fair point.

Could the clerk comment on when they believe they will know what slot we're allocated?

The Clerk: We do not know at this time. As soon as I do have confirmation on a spot, I will let you know.

The Chair: Okay.

Are you comfortable as a committee then, if I work with the clerk and you send your motions in and then once we know what we're scheduled to do, we will put out an agenda for a subcommittee team to discuss, and the meeting following that would be of the general committee?

Mrs. Wong.

Hon. Alice Wong: My hand was up for the same reason—about scheduling.

Most of us are working from home and my home is three hours behind Ottawa. That means if we're meeting at 8:00, I'm meeting at 5:00.

I just wanted to let people know that we have a wide range of time zones. Please consider those who are on the far west or on the far east. I think we represent the whole nation, so I just wanted to make sure.

I don't mind getting up at 4 a.m., but I just want to make sure that I know ahead of time and do not suddenly hear, "Let's meet at 5:30 in the morning".

That's just for your consideration.

The Chair: Absolutely, Ms. Wong.

If you think about it, if we have the coveted 8:30 time in the morning slot, that becomes 5:30 in the morning for you on the west coast. If we have the 3:30 to 5:30 slot, I believe that puts Ms. Hutchings to 7 at night.

We'll take that into consideration and see if I can have my way with the whips to influence that.

Is there any further business that we want to address today?

Very good, I'm glad to see this group together. This is important work—

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Madam Chair?

The Chair: Yes, Ms. Larouche.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I was wondering about something.

We've gone through everything on the agenda, but we still have some time left. Could we do an initial reading of the motions that people will be sending the clerk, to get the thought process going in advance of the subcommittee's examination?

• (1145)

[English]

The Chair: It's up to the will of the committee. We have the time if you're interested to hear some of the motions that Ms. Larouche, the NDP, and the Conservatives have prepared. Perhaps the Liberals have some as well. The clerk may have the ones that were previously presented. We could hear those.

Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Chair, it would take too long to read. If I understood correctly, the clerk will be emailing them to everybody. Reading them today would not be a productive use of our time. Maybe discussing conceptually what we want first, yes, but not reading the motions, because we have to go slowly, and it takes time. We're going to get them from the clerk's office. Why would it be beneficial to read the motions at this time?

The Chair: It may also be a difficult thing to manage over Zoom. My preference would be that the motions get sent out, so

that people can read them and think about them. Then we can have a fulsome discussion with members of the subcommittee, most of whom I expect will be very familiar with these topics that have been raised.

The meeting is adjourned.

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