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# Standing Committee on Health

EVIDENCE

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Monday, October 19, 2020

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Chair: Mr. Ron McKinnon





## Standing Committee on Health

Monday, October 19, 2020

• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome, everyone, to meeting number two of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health. The committee is meeting today to discuss committee business.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. I would like to start the meeting by providing you with some information following the motion that was adopted in the House on Wednesday, September 23, 2020.

The committee is now sitting in a hybrid format, meaning that members can participate either in person or by video conference. All members, regardless of their method of participation, will be counted for the purpose of a quorum. The committee's power to sit, however, is limited by the party use of House resources, which is determined by the whips.

All questions must be decided by recorded vote unless the committee disposes of them by unanimous consent or on division.

Finally, the committee may deliberate in camera, providing that it takes into account the potential risks to confidentiality inherent to such deliberations with remote participants.

The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. Webcasts will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow. For those participating virtually, members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of either “floor”, “English” or “French”. Before speaking, click on the microphone icon to activate your own mike. When you are done speaking, please put your mike on mute to minimize any interference.

I'll remind you that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

Should members need to request the floor outside of their designated time for questions, they should activate their mike and state that they have a point of order. If a member wishes to intervene on a point of order that has been raised by another member, they should use the “raise hand” function. This will signal to the chair your interest to speak and create a speakers list. In order to do so,

you should click on “participants” at the bottom of the screen. When the list pops up you will see that next to your name you can click “raise hand”.

When speaking, speak slowly and clearly. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the use of headsets with a boom microphone is mandatory for everyone participating remotely. Should any technical challenges arise, please advise the chair and please note that we may need to suspend for a few minutes as needed to ensure all members are able to participate fully.

For those participating in person, proceed as you usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room. Keep in mind the directives from the Board of Internal Economy regarding masking and health protocols.

Should you wish to get my attention, signal me with a hand gesture or, at an appropriate time, call out my name. Should you wish to raise a point of order, wait for an appropriate time and indicate to me clearly that you wish to raise a point of order.

With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

I see we have a speakers list. First on the list is Ms. Rempel Garner.

Ms. Rempel Garner, please go ahead.

• (1105)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move:

That, pursuant to standing order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Health commence a study on the emergency situation facing Canadians in light of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that this study evaluate, review and examine all issues relevant to this situation; and

that this study begin no later than October 20, 2020, that the Committee table its findings in the House upon completion, that the government provide a response to these findings within 30 sitting days, and that evidence and documentation received by the Committee during its study of the Canadian response to the outbreak of the corona virus commenced during the 1st Session of the 43rd Parliament be taken into consideration by the Committee in the current study, and that each party will be entitled to one witness per one hour witness panel, and two witnesses per two hour witness panel; and

That in order to fully study this emergency situation:

(a) an order of the committee do issue for all memoranda, e-mails, documents, notes and other records from the Prime Minister's Office, the Privy Council Office, the Office of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Office of the Minister of Health, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, concerning options, plans and preparations for the Global Public Health Integration Network, since January 1, 2018, provided that these documents, organized by department, shall be provided to the clerk of the committee within thirty days of the adoption of this motion;

(b) an order of the committee do issue for a record of all communications between the government and the World Health Organization in respect of options, plans or preparations for any future operation, or absence thereof, of the Global Public Health Integration Network, since January 1, 2018 provided that these documents, organized by department, shall be provided to the clerk of the committee within thirty days of the adoption of this motion;

(c) an order of the committee do issue for all memoranda, e-mails, documents, notes and other records from the Prime Minister's Office, the Privy Council Office, the office of the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, the office of the Minister of Health, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, concerning plans, preparations, approvals and purchasing of rapid testing products including rapid tests, reagents, swabs, laboratory equipment and other material related to rapid tests and rapid testing applications used in the diagnosis of COVID-19, since March 19th, 2020, provided that these documents, organized by department, shall be provided to the clerk of the committee within thirty days of the adoption of this motion;

(d) an order of the committee do issue for all memoranda, e-mails, documents, notes and other records from the Prime Minister's Office, the Privy Council Office, the office of the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, the office of the Minister of Health, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada concerning plans, preparations and purchasing of personal protective equipment including gowns, gloves, masks, respirators, visors and face shields since, March 19th, 2020, provided that these documents, organized by department, shall be provided to the clerk of the committee within thirty days of the adoption of this motion;

(f) that, to protect against the premature disclosure of national security matters, or personal privacy information, contained in the documents provided to the clerk prior to the release of the documents by the Clerk of the Committee, any potential redactions be undertaken by the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, provided that the process for redactions begin the day after the documents have been provided to the clerk of the committee, and shall last no longer than seven days, unless granted an extension by unanimous vote of the committee, and (i) that redactions be limited to the protection of national security matters, or personal privacy information to the exclusion of all other reasons, and (ii) that in the event of a request for an extension the request be accompanied by the release of all documents for which redactions have already been completed, and (iii) that in the event of multiple requests for extension, all documents for which redactions have been completed since the last request for an extension must accompany any additional requests for extension, and (iv) no request for an extension may exceed seven days and all extensions shall be granted only by unanimous vote of the members of the committee

(g) Seven days after all documents have been provided to the Clerk of the Committee or the deadlines for their production have elapsed, as the case may be, and the redaction process mentioned in subparagraph (b)(ii) has concluded, invite the Minister of Health, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry each to appear separately before the committee for at least three hours, provided that in respect of each of them who does not agree, within one week of the adoption of this motion, to accept this invitation for the length of time prescribed, the Chair shall be instructed to report to the House forthwith a recommendation that this committee be empowered to order his or her appearance from time to time.

● (1110)

Mr. Chair, it has now been over a week since this matter was first discussed in this committee. I firmly believe we need to move on with this. I realize that certain members of the committee last time tried to extend the meeting so that this wouldn't come to a vote. I think we need to move on.

We were prorogued for some time. The documents I've mentioned here for production are all relevant to the study, and we need

to move on with this. It is a very reasonable motion. It allows all members of the committee to look at areas related to the pandemic that are of interest to them and their community or broader constituency groups. It allows each political party to have one witness per panel, and we're going to have the documentation that we need as parliamentarians to review the government's response.

I'm in Ottawa today and I would just like to say that I feel for the restaurants in this city that have perhaps taken out the last of their savings to stay open over the last few months and have been shut down again. Toronto and a large part of Quebec are in this situation, and I think about my home province of Alberta, where we're seeing cases on the rise too.

It's very incumbent on this committee to dispose of this matter, to move on and study this, so that we can come up with a plan for Canadians. I'm really hoping that members of this committee will allow this motion to come to a vote today so that we can move on. I'm hoping, given that members of the committee have had over a week to review the substantive components of this motion, that we can just move on with life.

I would encourage all members to support this. I think it's in the best interests of all of our constituents. I purposely tried to word it in a way such that it's non-partisan. We're looking for answers and for a way forward, so I come to you in a spirit of collaboration whereby we can work together across party lines to get some answers and provide the government with a path forward and some recommendations that they can look at and can possibly give Canadians some hope, especially those who are being faced with isolation and more shutdowns.

That is the spirit of this motion. I strongly hope that the Liberals don't filibuster it this time, that we can vote in favour of it and that we can move on and start planning our study.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

I note that you keep referring to "this time". This matter was not voted on before. This is a new motion, and in a spirit of collaboration, I would appreciate getting a copy of it so that I can review it. I believe the other members would prefer to have a copy as well.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Chair, I can send it along.

Because it's my understanding that some members of the Liberal Party may not want a prescriptive list of all the study areas, all I've done is remove the prescriptive list from the motion I put forward on Friday, because the opening text of the motion that I presented a week ago Friday already includes all areas related to the pandemic.

I also added a line related to every party's having at least one witness per panel. I think this is pretty reasonable and pretty standard operating procedure. It will give clarity to you as chair concerning how to put witness panels together for this study.

In this way, every member and every political party can decide what's important to them in the study of this matter. For me, many of the issues related in the document production order were material.

The other thing is that for clarity I believe I removed one paragraph related to ventilators, because it was already included in one of the document production orders anyway. That was it.

It should be pretty easy for the government to support this. There's nothing in it, I think, that is inflammatory language or partisan. This is really about getting answers for the health committee and moving forward in a productive way.

• (1115)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Have you sent that motion to me?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I've been talking, so no.

To be honest with you, Chair, I wasn't sure if you'd recognized me first or not. I'm happy to do that while we're sitting here. It is in order.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

I'm new to all this. I've been here a year, but I'm not sure on what you can ask as a point of order. Can I ask for us to have five minutes to discuss this? I don't even remember everything that was in that motion. I think we have to look at it a little before we decide what to do with it. Is it possible to recess for five minutes to get a copy of this and to read it again?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** On that point of order, I will say something. If this is a ploy to permanently suspend the meeting today, I would not be in favour of that. I want to register my objection that, if this is to give you direction to shut the meeting down so that we don't come to a vote, as we've seen in other committees, I don't support that. I think that would be fairly bad.

I'm happy to suspend for five minutes to give me a chance to send it around to folks, but I would ask that you commit to reconvening at 11:30 a.m. eastern at the latest.

I want to say to my colleagues, come prepared to these meetings. I understand that Liberals may have sent motions around, and I'm assuming that, had they gotten the floor, they might have moved this. I was prepared to amend that motion on the fly. People should be coming to these committees prepared. When I walk through the changes that I made to a motion on Friday, you should be able to do that on the fly too.

I'm happy to suspend to 11:30, but beyond that we need to move on with life.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Mr. Kelloway.

**Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr Chair, I think everyone here is trying to come together in the spirit of collaboration and co-operation and not just say hollow words. However, when I hear a lecture coming to us from Michelle Rempel Garner on being prepared, it's hard to be prepared for motions when you get them while you're live on television. There seems to be a complete and utter lack of credibility in saying, "Be ready for something that I'm going to send you while you're on Zoom." I find that utterly ridiculous.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** On that point of order, Mr. Chair, in a committee business meeting, anybody can move anything they want on a study. It's our job as parliamentarians to be ready. That was a little patronizing—

**Mr. Mike Kelloway:** Not at all.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** —and it's also a little ridiculous to think that you can't come prepared to a committee business meeting, especially when I walked through what the changes were.

Anyway, I think this is the best course of action forward. I would support a 10-minute recess to 11:30 a.m. I will send this around, and then perhaps members can review that quickly and we can move forward.

**Mr. Mike Kelloway:** Mr. Chair, may I say something?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Mr. Kelloway, go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Kelloway:** The only way for us to clearly understand the motions that come before us is by having time to look at them before they come.

If the member is saying that we should all be Kreskin, that's a metaphysical discussion we should probably have at a later date.

• (1120)

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Chair, on this point of order, if I may, Ms. Rempel Garner's point here is that this motion is 98% what was presented to this committee more than a week ago. I had it in front of me. I followed along with the changes that were made. For Mr. Kelloway to say that this is somehow a whole new motion that we just threw on the floor here today I think is completely disingenuous.

As members of this committee, we are dealing with one of the most important issues all of our constituents want us to be talking about. This motion is part of that. They want to see a strategy, a runway, to how we get through this. That also includes how we got here. This is a matter of trust. This motion is very detailed and it is almost identical to the motion that was tabled in this committee more than a week ago.

For the members of this committee from the Liberal Party to be saying that we're somehow submarining them or dropping this dictionary upon them is really unfair. To say this is some sort of Kreskin mind reading ploy I don't think is fair. If we take five or 10 minutes, as Ms. Rempel Garner has offered to do to review this motion and the small changes that are part of this motion that was tabled in this committee more than a week ago, I think that is totally fair.

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, on that point of order, it's great that Mr. Barlow has it in front of him. We don't. I don't know if it has been—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** On a point of order, Mr. Barlow doesn't have the motion.

**Mr. John Barlow:** I have the previous motion.

**The Chair:** Excuse me, everyone. Mr. Fisher has the floor.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Mr. Chair, we don't have this. I'm not sure if Mr. Thériault has this in front of him in French. If Mr. Barlow says he does have it in front of him, that's great. We would like to have this in front of us in English and French.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, every word is important. We need to review it, and with due respect to Mr. Thériault, if it is bilingual, they need to read it in French too. I want to ask Ms. Rempel Garner whether it is bilingual, which Mr. Thériault can read in French, because we have to respect our other party, too, the Bloc Québécois.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Chair, on that point of order—

**The Chair:** Sorry. I'm going to recognize Mr. Davies first. He hasn't had a chance to speak.

Mr. Davies.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Thank you.

First, as a matter of procedure, it seems to me that people are just jumping in and whoever puts their hand up and starts talking is being recognized. I saw Ms. Sidhu have her hand up before Mr. Fisher jumped in, yet you recognized Mr. Fisher. That's not to pick on Mr. Fisher; it's just an example.

The first thing I want to get straight here is what the speaking order is and how that is determined. It can't just be whoever grabs the microphone and starts talking. You're not respecting either the raised hands list or the order of visual calling on the screen. It just seems to be that the speakers are determining who gets recognized. Therefore, I'd like to register, for the sake of all of us, that we need to come to an agreement on a respectful, appropriate speaking order.

Second, to the point of order at hand, I also think we need to decide, as a committee, how we're going to proceed on this. Ms. Rempel Garner is absolutely correct: There is no requirement that any motion that is moved at a business meeting, relating to business, has to be in writing. If the committee wants to make such a requirement, we certainly can, but there is no such requirement.

Again, to Ms. Sidhu's comment, it doesn't have to be bilingual, because it doesn't even have to be in writing. Mr. Thériault could raise a motion from the floor, if he wished, and he could raise it in French.

What I would suggest is that it's very helpful for all of us on any type of motion, particularly one that has any length or complexity, for it to be produced in writing. What we typically do in these meetings is that once someone has moved the motion from the floor orally, we then take a moment to make sure that the clerk reads it out and we all write it down ourselves so that we have it in front of us. That is the way this committee has operated.

If you want to have a rule that motions have to be submitted in writing, prior to the meeting or not, we can make that decision, but

that is not in the standing orders of this committee presently and I think that needs to be emphasized.

Also, I don't think there is anything wrong with my colleague Mr. Powlowski's request. If a motion does come and it's in writing, and we get it in writing and it has complexity to it, absolutely we can take a moment to talk about it, but I would like to have those discussions on the record. If a party needs to caucus for a period of time, I totally respect that. I myself have an easy caucus. If the Liberals, the Conservatives or anybody else needs to do that, I'm fine with that.

To sum up what I'm saying, it would be good for all of us if we come to an agreement on how we recognize speakers and how motions will be presented to each other, because it is true that we all deserve to have the motion clearly in front of us and clearly understood in both official languages prior to having a sensible debate on it.

• (1125)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Davies.

We'll cut the debate off here.

First, Mr. Davies, I appreciate your comments regarding recognizing speakers. We do have a "raise hand" function on the participants panel. I was interpreting that to reflect the regular speaking order, not on intermediate points of order. I'm doing as best I can to identify people when they identify that they want to respond to the point of order.

On the point of order, and in the spirit of collaboration that Ms. Rempel Garner mentioned and the fact that we do need to properly review the motion before we proceed, we will suspend for one half hour. We will resume in 30 minutes.

Thank you very much.

• (1125)

(Pause)

• (1155)

**The Chair:** Thank you, everyone. The meeting is now resumed.

Mr. Kelloway was kicked off his session and lost his position in the speaking order.

I will now recognize Mr. Kelloway. I believe he wanted to speak.

**Mr. Mike Kelloway:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate this time to talk a little bit about the last meeting and this meeting.

I'm a little frustrated. It occurred to me, once I stepped back from the last meeting and this one—and hopefully that will change—that Ms. Rempel Garner obviously didn't intend, in my opinion, for her motion to pass during last Friday's meeting. If she had, she would have shared it with the Liberal members of the committee in advance, as seemed to have been done with the other opposition members.

Ms. Rempel Garner has considerable committee experience. She has considerable experience being a member of a governing party and an opposition party, and I have no doubt that she knows the importance of compromise when it comes to moving forward in a collaborative way. This is as true for a minority government as it is true for an opposition party, since neither has the numbers to pass what they want without agreement of enough members to proceed.

Presumably this is why she seems to have shared her motion with the opposition members; however, if it had been shared with the Liberal Party members in advance—and I'm confident that she knows this—we would have had an opportunity to review it and find a path forward, and I'm hoping that's still the case.

By not sharing it in advance, it was impossible last week to pass the motion. That should be even clearer now, as here we are once again at the table and she just dropped a motion and pretended that it was possible for everyone to be completely prepared to respond to it.

I know I'm a newbie to politics, but it seems to me a bit of a game, and I think many would think that way.

Mr. Chair, I have no doubt that she—

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Larry, go ahead on a point of order.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Mr. Chair, we were through this already a while ago in an earlier part of our meeting. The motion that we have before us today is exactly the same as the one before with letters taken out of it on the first page. Some were saying that they didn't have it. Well, we have all had it. It's all there.

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order.

Mr. Kelloway can continue his speech.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I'm just saying it's a bit disingenuous to say—

**The Chair:** This is getting into debate, and Mr. Kelloway does have the floor for debate.

On a point of order, Mr. Van Bynen, go ahead.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I hate to interrupt, but as a point of order, Ms. Rempel Garner waltzed through her changes fairly quickly, and now that we have the new document, I would see some benefit in going through the changes and highlighting the changes she has made. That would be more helpful for me as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Van Bynen. That is also not a point of order.

Mr. Kelloway, please go ahead.

**Mr. Mike Kelloway:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll pick up where I left off. It ties into this stream of conversation. I have no doubt some will say that we're the ones stalling the committee and preventing important work from being done, and honestly, this is what frustrates me and I think it frustrates a lot of Canadians.

I'm disappointed that the Conservatives' approach to this committee for this new session of Parliament seems to be a lot of theatre and not focused on action. Their objective appears to be to make it impossible for any real work to be done while pretending they're trying to do important work.

• (1200)

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC):** Mike, are you just going to mansplain for a bit, or are we going to get to something here?

**The Chair:** Mr. d'Entremont, Mr. Kelloway has the floor.

**Mr. Mike Kelloway:** I'm new to parliamentary procedures, but I'm wondering if “mansplain” is acceptable terminology. It's quite offensive to many people.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Hold on, everybody.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Since the mansplaining is happening to me, I would—

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner, you do not have the floor.

Mr. d'Entremont, you do not have the floor.

Please do not interject. Please do not interrupt the speakers other than with a valid point of order.

Mr. Kelloway, you have the floor.

**Mr. Mike Kelloway:** Are we sure I have the floor here? I just want to make sure.

It seems to me that their objective is to make it impossible for anything to get done. The motion is simply too big to create any productive study, with or without a global pandemic at our feet. For me, it doesn't allow us to look into particular issues in-depth. It certainly doesn't allow us to do any good for Canadians.

Frankly, to me it seems as though it was drafted without any real desire to assist Canadians through this pandemic. It's workable, but it's certainly not usable as it stands. Many parts of her motion completely minimize the importance of an issue, or request that we study a topic that has already been resolved.

I'm hopeful that at least some of my colleagues across the table want to do the right thing to help Canadians and will listen to what I have to say.

I'd like to provide some explanation for my perspective because I think that most, if not all, of my colleagues will be able to relate to or understand where I'm coming from. I decided to run for Parliament out of a desire to give back to my community, to my constituents in Cape Breton—Canso and to Canadians. Like all of my colleagues, I want to be their voice in the House of Commons, especially at committee. I really feel fortunate to sit on the Standing Committee on Health, especially during these challenging times.

I feel that this committee is one of the most important committees, or perhaps the most important committee right now for Canadians. There are so many important studies that we could be taking on. I look to one study from my colleague Mr. Van Bynen, which is a study on mental health and the effects of COVID. It's clearly one of those important considerations. I look to my colleague Ms. Sidhu's proposed study on long-term care as another.

These are real studies. They're designed based on the needs of Canadians and the interests expressed by all parties in the committee and the House. Their design was intentional, which is to ensure that we have the support to commence them as quickly as possible to get Canadians the help they need and deserve.

If I'm not mistaken, even Ms. Rempel Garner commented on the significance of these issues during the debate in this committee this past Friday by including them in her omnibus motion.

My colleagues chose issues that are relevant and critical to what the committee does and should be doing at a pivotal moment in our country's history.

I want to stress that I'm by no means suggesting that these are the only good items. The essence of a committee and committee work is around compromise. I referred to it earlier in our last meeting around team Canada. We work best when we're working together. We discuss the interests of Canadians, what we should undertake and when and how we should undertake it. This is how our committee generally operated even throughout the early months of COVID, if you remember. We did not always agree, and that's okay, but it was always clear that everyone who sat on the committee, whether it was the Liberals or Conservatives or Bloc Québécois or NDP, all had a common goal. That common goal was to be productive.

That's why I'm disappointed to see what's happened in the past couple of meetings. I'm frustrated to see that there seems to be some partisan games being played here. We have to get to work at putting more motions forward that have purpose, meaning and are doable.

I also want to briefly note that it's been suggested that we've lost time due to prorogation. I don't think that's accurate. Prior to prorogation, this committee already decided to reduce its sitting days from the months of July and August. As I understand it—again, I'm new to politics—prorogation allows governments to stop and to refocus.

One year ago when the speech from the throne was made, Canada was in a different place. The world was in a different place. Even if our priorities remain as important to us now as they did then, the world has been plagued by a pandemic that has caused all of us to rethink our day-to-day lives. We all have stories in our

lives. For some, it's working from home. For others, it's home-schooling children or finding a safe way to care for loved ones.

It is logical, then, that a government would need time to pause, reflect and refocus attention. There were no summer breaks. There was very little time for reflection, particularly for members of this committee. At the time of prorogation, the pandemic was sufficiently controlled to provide an opportunity for us to take a step back and reassess our priorities. Since that time we've seen case numbers spike in really terrifying ways.

Once again, we need to act. We need to protect Canadians. We need to prevent the situation from getting out of hand. We've already seen the devastating effects that have occurred in other countries. We've done well in Canada, but we need to keep at it and keep doing better because better is always possible.

● (1205)

It's premature to request documents in the manner that has been set out in the motion. Receiving a massive package of documents that we all need to sort through is, I think, unproductive. Rather, as each topic is studied, documents can be requested from the witnesses who appear before the committee, as they often are. This will ensure that we receive the relevant documents at the time we're studying each issue. This will also help us know what documents are relevant to our study as witnesses can point us in the right direction, which they often do, based on their expertise and experience. Certainly, that would be a more efficient and helpful way to request documents.

The way they have been requested in this motion is somewhat problematic, not only because of the challenges it will present for us, and the fact that it won't enable us to effectively do our jobs, but also because of the human and financial costs it will entail. Need I remind all the members that the public service continues to work around the clock with real objectives to help all Canadians? Every time documents are requested, whether the request is large or small, it is our hard-working public servants who have to look through the documents, compile them and translate them. This country's bilingualism is one of the greatest strengths of our country, but it also requires that time and money be spent on translation. This means that documents can't be produced as quickly.



Not only that, but it's also important to consider the amount of time these document searches take. Every person involved does their utmost to ensure their search is thorough. This takes days, weeks and perhaps even months. Each person involved in that search is taken away from their work to do this, which means that fewer people are working on the issues that matter most to Canadians. This not only applies to the hard-working public servants in government departments, but when the production of document requests relate to ministers and to their offices, the same logic also applies to all of those people. It stops the preparation of essential legislation, stops critical engagement with stakeholders and means going through every email, every memo, every note in order to ensure that these requests are satisfied.

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not suggesting in any way that transparency is not important. Of course it is. We would all agree with that. I know there are some who will try to paint this as a government trying to avoid being open and transparent with Canadians, but that could not be further from the truth. The truth is there's a balance between transparency and efficiency. All I'm suggesting is that the right balance needs to be struck so that we do not unnecessarily delay or restrict the government's capacity to do the work Canadians want us to do. In fact, they need us to do this work.

Canadians are counting on us. On top of the fact that hard-working public servants who are doing the critical work of helping Canadians and keeping people safe will be forced to redirect their efforts to filling these orders, it is worth noting, given that most, if not all, people are working from home, that locating these documents poses a challenge. Most people are not in their offices at the moment because they can't be. Daily case counts in Quebec and Ontario have been over 1,000, I think, and are rising. People need to be able to work from home. This makes locating documents, quite frankly, even more time-consuming and challenging.

It seems to me that Conservatives don't appear to be concerned about that, but I think Canadians care about these things, and we care about these things. We're here because Canadians elected us. I would like to do the work that Canadians need us to do, because if we don't, the situation will not improve.

I, obviously, cannot support this motion as it is presently drafted, and quite frankly, I'm not sure anyone can. To be a workable motion, the production of document requests needs to be removed and the date needs to be changed from October 20 to another logical date. I'm hopeful that my colleagues across the way will make these changes, and that we can be supported by all members to do so.

Thank you very much.

• (1210)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kelloway.

I see that Mr. Van Bynen is next on the list.

I'm sorry, Mr. Van Bynen. I'm not sure if you were on the list for this debate or for the original—

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** This was on the original motion. I had intended to put my motion forward, but I'll defer to my colleague.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order. I'm looking at the participant "raise hand" list, and I'm first. I'm not even sure

how Mr. Kelloway got on before me. I'm looking straight at the participant list, and I'm the first one with my hand up.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** As am I. I think that's the way the—

**The Chair:** On my list, Mr. Van Bynen is first, followed by Ms. Sidhu, Mr. Barlow, Dr. Powlowski and so on.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Well, I'm looking two above and I'm above the operator. I'm the first one.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** So am I on my screen, Don.

**The Chair:** Everybody is first on their own list.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Oh, I see.

Can you reveal the list?

**The Chair:** Mr. Van Bynen, maybe you could take yourself off this list because you were continuing to speak before the original motion was spoken. In fact, would anyone who does not wish to speak at this particular time in debate remove their hand.

On the list that I have before me right now we have Ms. Sidhu, Mr. Barlow, Dr. Powlowski, Mr. Maguire, Mr. Davies, Ms. Rempel Garner and Mr. d'Entremont.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Thank you. That clears it up, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** We'll go now to Ms. Sidhu.

Were you intending to speak at this point in the debate?

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Mr. Chair, I agree with my colleague Mr. Kelloway. I am concerned that the goal of Ms. Rempel Garner's motion is not to get good work done for Canadians. There are more important issues for Canadians. This is the second meeting we have spent largely on one motion in an attempt to discuss these topics without any real concrete direction. Quite frankly, there are some topics in the motion with which I think all my colleagues agree, but we need to find common ground.

It is almost wasting time, I would say, if we are not working on important topics like mental health, long-term care or other important issues that are only briefly mentioned and are buried in the massive motion for the production of documents, and I cannot agree with that.

I agree that there is an important issue that is near and dear to Canadians when we are having a second wave of COVID-19. I trust that members of the opposition do, in fact, want to get good work done. We all want to produce solid reports to Parliament, but this motion is simply not the way to do it.

The approach I would like to see the committee take is to study aspects of COVID-19, whether it relates to mental health, long-term health care or any other topic related to the health of Canadians. We could do a study on a topic, have a report, and then go on to the next one. For example, how are we supposed to even consider studying post-production of the documents when there are more important topics we can study? Let's find common ground.

In my riding, residents are contacting me regarding long-term care, which has been hit hard. This is important. That is most important to me. It's the same thing for many of my colleagues who have important issues, so let's find common ground.

There is no paid sick leave. We have talked about that. Many residents are contacting me on that because it's not there. Yesterday I was talking to someone about why I am talking about paid sick leave. I am because it's related to health. I'm happy to take a moment to speak of the great work of all parties that wish to secure paid sick leave for Canadians.

Long-term care is very near and dear to me.

As you know, we all have seen the statistics that mental health has been very impacted due to COVID-19.

Let's find common ground, and then we can all work together for the betterment of Canadians. This is what I would urge the committee to do. Mr. Chair, that's what I really want to say.

Mr. Chair, there is my motion that I want to table, which is very important for my residents, but now Ms. Rempel Garner's motion is there.

Let's find common ground and, as my colleague Mr. Kelloway said, if we are for production of documents where we can relate the good work and the important work of our health care workers, our public servants....

This is all political games, I would say. Let's do real work for Canadians, which is important for everyone's riding.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1215)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Sidhu.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the comments from my colleagues. A couple of things jumped out at me in the comments from Mr. Kelloway and Ms. Sidhu. I certainly respect their perspectives, but they're asking us to do in-depth studies that are, for most intents and purposes, provincial issues. Sick leave, mental health and long-term care are, for the most part, under provincial jurisdiction. The provinces should be the ones focusing on that.

However, for Mr. Kelloway to say it's too much work for this committee go through the documents that would be given to this committee as part of this study is very short-sighted. That is our job. Our job here is to look through the documents and find the information that our constituents are asking for. If it's going to take me all night to read the documents to ensure we have the information we need, that is what I was elected to do. It's to do the hard work that my constituents expect me to do. There have been all-

night votes. There have certainly been some long nights reading documents, but I think that is one of our responsibilities. Our constituents expect nothing less from us.

This is one of the most important issues we have ever dealt with as parliamentarians. When we were elected, I don't think any of us were expecting to deal with something like COVID-19, which has seized our entire country and our entire economy.

However, Canadians are looking for a couple of things. They're looking for a strategy, a path forward. To arrive at that, we also need to understand how we got to where we are right now.

That brings us to this motion, which I believe is completely fair and is certainly not an omnibus motion. I have it sitting in front of me. It's on a page and a half. Mr. Kelloway should look at the 300-page omnibus bills that the Liberals have been putting forward for the last couple of years—like an 800-page budget bill—if he wants to see an omnibus document. It is by no means overwhelming for a parliamentarian to look at this motion. I think it's quite fair. Certainly some details are being requested of the government, but that is what we need to be looking at.

There's no question, Mr. Chair, that this is the number one issue for our constituents. They want to know what decisions were made for the pandemic and why decisions were made when it came to the pandemic alert system. They want to know what strategy was in place to get us to where we are right now. I think that includes the details that these documents are going to provide. That's why I fully support the motion that Ms. Rempel Garner put forward, and the amended motion that makes it more palatable to all the parties involved. I don't see any reason to delay proceeding.

Seeing the filibusters going on in the other committees, I think Canadians would be looking to the health committee to get some real work done. It is real work, Mr. Kelloway, to be looking at the details of the pandemic assessment, the pandemic reaction and the plans for dealing with this crisis for Canadians right across this country.

I vehemently disagree that this motion is asking us to do too much work. I think this is exactly why our constituents voted to bring us here, no matter what party stripe we are wearing. They are asking us to do everything we need to do to find out as much information and as many details as we possibly can on COVID-19. That is why I fully support that we move along on this study as quickly as possible.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

• (1220)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Barlow.

We go now to Dr. Powlowski. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski:** I too am becoming frustrated with spinning our wheels. I certainly believe what almost everyone here says and claims: that we want to get back to what we actually should be doing as a health committee, which is studying the health impacts of the pandemic. Instead, we're spinning our wheels.

However, I think the Conservatives knew this when they put this motion on the table, when they put in a whole bunch of things regarding procurement of documents that they knew were going to be problematic to the Liberals and yet chose to include them. I question how real their desire to start looking at things really is.

What they've done in this motion is conflate two things. The first part is getting back to looking at COVID, which I absolutely agree with. The second part of the document is about procurement of documents, which is absolutely pretty problematic.

There are all kinds of live issues. Part of the problem with the procurement of documents is that they're looking at dead issues. They're looking at what has happened in the past.

If we really want to be studying—and we ought to be studying—this second wave and what we can do now to help Canadians deal with it and help the economy deal with it, the best way is through having a sound health approach. There are all kinds of health issues that we could be studying, should we choose to do so. There are all kinds of issues related to vaccines, such as how we could develop vaccines potentially more quickly and the issue of procurement of vaccines.

I absolutely agree that there are many issues around testing. We haven't heard much from Conservatives about strategies for testing. It's not just about having rapid test kits. Having rapid test kits is important, but there is also the issue of strategies behind testing. You have to look at the value of rapid test kits in particular circumstances, especially if you're going to use rapid test kits where they want to use them—for instance, when you go into northern indigenous communities or when you go into a factory and say, “Oh, let's just do a rapid test kit.”

Whether that's valuable or not depends on the incidence of the disease in the population. You have to understand, before you say “Let's do rapid test kits, because doing so is going to solve all the problems”, that potentially it doesn't. If you have a high enough incidence of the disease in a population and you don't have a completely sensitive and specific test, it doesn't help you in ruling out disease.

There are also many other issues, such as contact tracing. Obviously many provinces are not doing contact tracing really well. Apparently they've given up on it in places in Toronto. What's that about?

There's the global approach. I'd like to see us look a bit at that. COVAX is an attempt globally to ensure that people around the world have access to vaccines. There's the ACT-Accelerator, which hasn't received a whole lot of press, but it is an attempt by WHO and a number of other international agencies to address the pandemic.

The first part is to get back to studying it. Yes, absolutely. Then there is a second part, the procurement of documents.

I believe in transparency, I really do, but I also appreciate what the ministry and the department are saying, which is that you're asking for a whole lot of documents at a time when, as Mr. Barlow correctly said, this is our biggest health crisis and maybe our biggest crisis in the last hundred years. It is Health Canada officials who are centrally dealing with it. Now we're asking them to suddenly produce tonnes and tonnes of documents and have them all translated into French. I think maybe we should be trying to whittle down a bit the list of what we can and can't produce.

There are also concerns about our relationship with the provinces. Obviously health care is primarily a provincial jurisdiction, and our ability to co-operate and deal effectively with the provinces is integral to the way we deal with the second wave. To produce documents that could potentially embarrass the provinces or harm our relationship with the provinces wouldn't seem at this time to be a good idea.

• (1225)

One of the bottom lines to what we ought to be doing as a committee—and I want this to be working too—is that we should be concentrating on the live issues, not the issues that have occurred in the past.

Certainly this procurement of documents is obviously to dig up some dirt and to look at absolutely everything, but what has happened has happened. I don't think this is the time to be reviewing everything that has happened since the beginning of the pandemic. Our function as a committee would be better served by dealing with issues that are still live issues. If we actually get our act together, perhaps we can start dealing with these problems in a constructive fashion, rather than battling each other.

I'm quite happy to face the fireworks on the procurement issue. I think we have to do it. The opposition wants those things, but why don't we leave that issue to a later date? If anyone actually watches what we do on the health committee—which is questionable, but if they do—I think the Canadian public might justifiably be saying, “What are they doing? Here it is, a pandemic, and they're arguing over procurement of documents.”

I would suggest that we leave it for two or three weeks and start looking at the actual issues again. Yes, you will come back to it, and it's important that you do, because you are the opposition, and that's what you do. However, why don't we leave this conversation for a later date and start actually doing something useful instead?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Dr. Powlowski.

We'll go now to Mr. Maguire.

Mr. Maguire, please go ahead.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I would have thought a useful thing to do would be to discuss, examine and review all issues relevant to the situation. That's why I'm supporting this amended motion that my colleague, the shadow cabinet minister for health here, Michelle Rempel Garner, has brought forward, and “all” is all-encompassing.

What is more urgent? We can talk about a lot of things. Mental health is important. Long-term care is important. However, probably one of the most important things right now is making sure we can get testing for people in a timely manner, and we haven't had that. Rapid testing and home testing approvals are what the people in my riding are wondering about.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, Mr. Maguire called this an "amended motion". Is it an amended motion?

**The Chair:** As an amended motion, it would not be in order, because Ms. Rempel Garner cannot amend her own motion. However, she moved it as a separate motion. The other motion still exists out there, lying in wait for us to resume at some other time, should the occasion arise.

In my view, this is a new motion, and it is as much in order as the previous motion was.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Thank you for the clarity there. I wasn't certain.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Maguire, please.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to Mr. Fisher for correcting me on that, but it is a motion. I'd gladly go back and discuss the earlier one, because these issues are all in it, but for the sake of co-operation here, this new motion has been brought forward to try to get the immediacy of the situation on the table.

For my colleague, as was pointed out by Mr. Powlowski, this is the most important issue in Canada right now, or one of them at least. People are watching the health committee because health is important to everybody right now in this country.

We finally have Parliament operating again, and it's an opportunity for us to immediately get into this issue and get the documentation. Mr. Kelloway said in his opening comments that somebody might say this isn't being transparent. I would certainly say so, because these documents are not coming forward. If there's nothing there, well then, just bring them forward and we'll get on with things.

The second part in the original motion was "in order to to fully study this emergency situation". That's what we want to do: study the emergency. The way it has been presented today recognizes it as an emergency, and it is an all-encompassing motion. It includes all issues.

There are issues that we could speak about, and they've been listed, but rapid testing has to be one of those. Vaccine development and all these other things will be there as the world develops them, but the situation now is that rapid testing has already been okayed by the government, but we're not seeing it and we don't have it. All we're asking for is an opportunity to study this and let Canadians have their questions answered, because that's what we're seeing today. Anybody who says that "all" isn't all-encompassing hasn't read the motion or wasn't listening to it when it was read out.

The right balance does need to be struck here, and we could easily move forward. The reason there are dates in here, if you want to

move it back a week, is that tomorrow is October 20, and we've already had that original motion for 10 days. I'm in favour of starting tomorrow with this, if we could, because the sooner we can get this information gathered together, the sooner we can make good decisions for Canadians.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Maguire.

We go now to Mr. Davies. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Thank you.

This has been another interesting debate. I wanted to comment, in no particular order, on the motion that was moved by Ms. Rempel Garner. To me, it addressed the very problems that were identified by the Liberals in the last meeting.

At the last meeting, I distinctly heard Liberals say that they were concerned that the motion wasn't inclusive. I heard Liberals say that they didn't like the long itemized list. They felt it was too prescriptive. I heard Liberals say they didn't include important issues that they wanted to study, like mental health or live-in care.

The motion that was moved this morning addresses every one of those. It eliminates the list that was so troubling to my Liberal colleagues at the last meeting. It is explicitly inclusive, without being prescriptive. It is fair in the sense that it allocates witnesses. It allows all parties to submit witnesses that reflect their own particular interests. I think I can speak for all of us in saying that I haven't heard any member of this committee say that they're not interested in the issues of mental health, live-in care, the federal health transfer or vaccine development.

It brings me to this. I'm hoping I can stimulate some violent agreement here. First, I hear us saying that we all want to study COVID. I think we should. Let's face it: There are ten thousand issues in health, and many of them are extremely important. This is not to deny the importance of any other issue that we could be looking at, but we are in the middle of the second wave of a global pandemic, and I don't even need to speak about this. I hope my colleagues all agree that the number one public health issue on a national basis in this country right now is COVID. I think we all should and can agree that we should be studying COVID.

Second, I think we should all agree that we should adopt the evidence that we heard in the first session. From January, February and all the way through to July, we heard a lot of excellent testimony.

Third, I think we should agree that we don't want to till well-tilled ground or go over things that we've covered in depth. Rather, I think we can agree that we can and should focus our inquiry on issues that are really important now. I said this in the last meeting and I'll say it again: It's October of 2020, and we are in a different position than we were in March when this was brand new and so much was unknown. We know a lot more now, but there's a lot more to be known, for sure, and we should be able to focus our inquiry. To that end, I appreciate Ms. Rempel Garner's amendment to this motion that allows us to submit witnesses that reflect that.

Ms. Sidhu wants to focus on long-term care. She can put witnesses in to that end. Mr. Van Bynen wants to focus on mental health. He can submit witnesses on mental health. I'd like to understand where we're at in vaccines. I'll submit that. Mr. Thériault wants to submit witnesses on the impact of federal transfer payments on the provinces. He can submit witnesses on that. These are areas we can focus on.

Finally, I think we can agree on a fair allocation of witnesses. I was very proud of this committee. We've operated very collegially over the last—in my experience—five years, and particularly over the last year. We were all putting in an equal number of witnesses. We got a really broad sampling of excellent witnesses that way. On the motion, as far as the study goes, when I listen to each one of my colleagues, I think we all agree on those broad points, but there's obviously a sticking point on the production issue.

I've been in Parliament for 12 years. I can say without too much cynicism that those in government don't like it. Those in opposition do. I have yet to see a government that is enthusiastic about producing documents for the opposition. For the opposition, of course, this is an effective tool to get information.

● (1235)

I hope that we can find common ground. When I listen to my Liberal colleagues, I don't hear them say that they're opposed to production; I hear that we should delay it a little bit. Some say that we should target it.

I must say two things. One is that when we talk about transparency, the argument is that it's very important, but we just can't do it. That is a fallacy. I hear in the arguments that we're very much committed to it, but there's always a reason we just can't do it now.

Frankly, transparency is important at all times. Arguably, transparency is more important at times of great political importance. Transparency isn't something that happens when we don't have an important issue before us. It should be something that happens all the time. If I take the Prime Minister at his word, he's on record as saying that repeatedly.

Second, I categorically reject the argument that we don't have any time for transparency. That argument is that we really want to be transparent, but we just can't burden our civil servants with it because they don't have the time. That's a fallacy as well. Our civil servants are always working, I would hope. They're always working on important issues.

The key is this: Is there a way for us to find a middle ground on this, where we can hone this motion to get the government to produce documents for the opposition that are targeted, surgical, useful, informative and revealing?

Committees do play an important role in Parliament. When Prime Minister Trudeau was elected in 2015, the Liberals recognized this. I will take one little shot at my Conservative colleagues. When they were in government, they did not treat committees in this way. They were controlled by the PMO. There was no real production. They did not treat committees with the respect for their independence that I think should have been the case.

The Liberals said that they were going to change that. At committees, we have a number of important rules. One is we have a historic constitutional and parliamentary power to order production of documents. The reason for that is that one of our functions, besides reviewing legislation and studying issues, is to serve as an accountability body. If we're not getting documents from the government to double-check their political claims, who is?

I want to hear from my Liberal colleagues who say they believe in transparency and who say they believe in production, but who say that this motion is too broad or otherwise unacceptable. I want to see them draft their proposed production, instead of rhetorically....

Let's face it: The Liberals are filibustering this committee. They are talking this out. When Ms. Rempel Garner has gone through the trouble of drafting her motion and putting it out for debate, but it's too broad and they believe in transparency production, they should propose their amendments for the rest of the committee members to see. What are they willing to produce, if anything? All I hear is a lot of general commitment to production and not a word about how they'll do it.

I want to say one thing about Mr. Kelloway's comment. Having witnesses come before a committee and asking them to bring documents can be helpful, I agree, but that is not a substitute for the production request that is before us now. We're talking about documents that are exclusively within the control of the government. Witnesses don't just come bearing documents that way. We're talking about a discrete power of this committee to target documents.

I will sum up by asking if we can agree on this. Can we agree that this committee will study COVID, that we will adopt the evidence from last session and that we will roll up our sleeves and focus on the important issues that we can reach consensus on? Can we agree on a fair allocation of witnesses?

I'll ask the Liberals to draft what they think is a helpful production order so that we can see how far they're willing to go and whether we can find a common ground on the production of documents.

● (1240)

I fear that if we don't do this, this issue will be resolved in a much more blunt way. It won't be done by the consensus, collegiality and agreement that I think has typified this committee up until now.

Those are my comments.

Thanks for listening, colleagues.

**The Chair:** I note that Mr. Davies mentioned Ms. Rempel Garner's amended motion. I urge members not to consider this as an amended motion. It makes it difficult for me to see this as a separate motion. As an amended motion, it would not be in order. It's clearly of intense interest to this committee, so I'll let us continue it.

We have Ms. Rempel Garner next.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski:** As a point of information, is Mr. Davies suggesting at this time that we accept the first part of the motion, leaving the second part for us to try to amend at a later date?

**The Chair:** Mr. Davies, do you wish to respond to that point of information?

**Mr. Don Davies:** Thank you, Marcus, for the question.

I think there are a number of ways to go. I'm not trying to be completely prescriptive. What I'm talking about is conceptually to break this logjam. We do have a motion, and thank you, Mr. Chair, for correcting that. This is a new motion. What I'm suggesting is that the Liberals, instead of speaking against the motion generally, propose an amendment to the production section, or to any other part they think they'd like to amend, so that we can see what the Liberals are prepared to produce. At least we can evaluate that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Davies. Thank you, Dr. Powlowski, for your intervention.

We will go now to Ms. Rempel Garner on the debate.

Go ahead.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I think this motion is great. I'm very excited about getting the documents. Mr. Davies has outlined with great clarity why this can work, and my other colleagues have as well. I don't see any reason we wouldn't be able to get these documents, unless the Liberals have something to hide.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

We will go now to Mr. Van Bynen. Please go ahead.

• (1245)

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** I need to reflect back on some of the earlier comments about making amendments on the fly. It reminds me of something my father used to say, and that is, "Act in haste, and repent at leisure." That's my major concern on some of these items.

I think that any changes that are being proposed and introduced should be given due consideration. I know it's only two pages, but it's two pages in 11-point font. People like me need to reformat the documents so that we can read them a little better.

In some respects, dropping a motion like this on the table at the last minute is disrespectful—

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I can't believe it.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Well, it's true.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** That's a way to keep—

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** It's a reality, but thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Would the members of the committee please be able to maintain silence when they're not speaking? Also, we need no editorial comments, please.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Frankly, I think it's disrespectful in any event, but my focus is to look forward and not back.

Frankly, some of the things that were being proposed are of no assistance to the 97 people in my constituency who have been identified as having COVID, such as checking into the reasons for closure of borders, such as seeking documents and requesting that we now find out about the benefits of wearing non-medical masks or going into a number of documents and requesting a number of things. I think what we should be doing—and I appreciate Mr. Davies' comments—is talk not about what has been done but about what should be done going forward.

There are plenty of opportunities for us to go back and check the documents, but I believe the best purpose of this committee is to provide recommendations going forward, based on what we hear from experts.

We have had very extensive discussion in the 34 previous meetings we have had. We have had extensive input from the 71 witnesses. I think we should finalize the report to determine the baseline for what we should be seeking as we go forward. There's a lot of really valuable information.

First, let's finish the report we did in the first session and then find out what recommendations come forward out of it. That's what I think we should be focusing on: recommendations that would go forward.

I have seen a lot of finger-wagging and heard people saying you should have done this or you should have done that. Frankly, my motion, in terms of looking at mental health and how we can deal with the emerging pandemic, is an opportunity to do something on a go-forward basis.

I don't want to see anybody on the opposition side, when this pandemic gets out of hand, saying, "You should have." I am saying we should have; I am saying we need to focus on the emerging pandemic. I think this is going to be far more trying for our communities as we go forward, and far longer-lasting.

My concern, then, is around the numerous things that have been put forward. All they do is take us away from things we should be focusing on. I think we should set priorities. I think we should agree on what's important and what provides us with information from experts who are pointing the way forward. These are things we should consider.

We heard some of that in the last session. Sadly, only one meeting was on mental health. It's a serious concern that I have that we need to give plenty of thought to now before this becomes a pandemic. There's an opportunity for us to do something proactively. It's something we should agree on as we go forward, and I look forward to the opportunity of putting forward my motion as well.

There's a lot of merit to what's been said by Don about going forward to try to find things we can agree upon, but to the benefit of our constituents and not necessarily in the service of any partisan political masters.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Van Bynen.

We go now to Mr. Fisher.

Please go ahead.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thanks for all the comments that all the members have made today.

I said last week that I felt it was really important to.... Over my non-Thanksgiving turkey dinner while I was in isolation in Nova Scotia, I went over the motion the Conservatives had put forward. I took the time to review it. I've called it an omnibus motion, but clearly it's a fishing expedition. Now, today, we have another surprise. Some people say it's almost the same; some people say it's different. Regardless, it handcuffs people when things are thrown at them and then they have a brand new motion that's similar but not exactly.

Maybe, as Don said.... I believe and very clearly try to listen to Don when he speaks, because so often he makes sense. In his comment earlier about how this committee has worked well together, he was going back to a time prior to that of most of the members on this committee now, but the committee did work very well together even in the short time that we were all together.

We have a different motion, and we have 30 minutes to have a conversation about this motion. For 18 of those 30 minutes, I was waiting for the motion to come into the mailbox, because it took a while to come.

I can tell you, Mr. Chair, and I can say this first-hand from talking to my constituents, that Canadians want members of Parliament to work together. They appreciate it, they notice when it's done, and they want solutions and not games. I've said this before: We need to look forward rather than back.

We've heard from Sonia, from Tony Van Bynen, from Don, from Luc, from Mr. Barlow that they have motions they want to move forward. But we're now well into our second meeting, and the agenda has been hijacked, for lack of a better term, with this one particular motion, which as I started out I called an omnibus motion.

I enjoy the work we do on this committee and the committees I've been on in the past. I was on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. What an excellent example of a committee that worked really well together. We had all parties working together and produced really good, substantive reports. We had a unanimous report on protected areas across Canada, and I think that led to an investment of around one billion dollars into protected areas across Canada—incredible investments and partnerships in nature protection. Mr. Chair, it led to solutions.

I was hopeful that this committee could be a place in which members worked together for all Canadians. I listened to Don's comments about finding a way forward. I am hopeful—I was hopeful—that enough members on this committee would want to work together and undertake studies in a meaningful way so that we could provide.... This is what it's all about; this is what committees do. They provide solid recommendations to the government. This committee has done so in the past and can do it.

Make no mistake; we absolutely should continue studying COVID-19 in some form that is focused and less broad. That will allow us to study COVID-19 in a really meaningful way. We had an

incredible opportunity to work here again as a committee and undertake focused and meaningful studies that would benefit Canadians now and moving forward. As was said earlier, we're in the second wave or the resurgence or whatever you want to call it. This is the time for us to be focusing on aspects of that.

Just to go back to Mr. Van Bynen's motion, on which the opposition parties voted to adjourn debate, I believe this is a massive issue. This is an issue that I hear about from constituents all the time. Canadians lost loved ones. Canadians couldn't see loved ones. Isolation was a problem before COVID-19. I can tell you that it's going to be one of the issues of our time, when we finally find a way out of this. We do have an incredible opportunity.

• (1250)

Going through the new Conservative motion—and I won't say the word, Mr. Chair, because I know you'll shut me down—the new motion, the amended motion, or whatever you want to call it, the first part is fine. I honestly can't wait to get back to work on this. I do feel that this is important. It's probably, as Marcus said, one of the most important things of our time, at least in the last hundred years.

First of all, I'm not moving an amendment, but obviously we would have to move the date in this motion because that's tomorrow, and I think it's physically impossible for us. That's a small thing. Although I look forward to getting to work, due to logistics I don't see how we're going to be able to start that study tomorrow.

When I go through the second part, I can't help but think, wow, who are the busiest people in the country right now? It's front-line health care workers and health-related public servants. As Don said, and I agree, public servants are always working, but I'd say that this is a little bit of a different situation and a different life. Public servants, many of them having to work from home, are tasked with massive jobs in front of them here, and I think it's a little different from the norm.

This motion is asking hard-working public servants to stop what they're doing or to do something in parallel while they're trying to keep Canadians safe. They're learning about this disease, this virus, COVID-19, as the science changes on a regular basis and as we learn more about it, so let's stop all the work that the public servants are doing or let them find a way to work in parallel to do all these things when it comes to producing all these documents. We're talking about reams and reams of documents.

Mr. Davies also said that the opposition loves to produce documents like this. I'm not negating that fact, but this is a massive document grab, asking the busiest public servants to stop everything or work in parallel.

Maybe the Conservatives have forgotten that we're in a pandemic. You know, some of the provinces have indeed. I'm safely ensconced in the Atlantic bubble, but we have to take this very seriously. Some provinces are in bad shape. They need our help, and we've been helping and partnering with them from day one.

Canadians are best served and represented in this committee when we all work together. The focus here must be on keeping Canadians safe. We talk a lot about transparency. Transparency is very important, and there are ways to make sure that we have the information we need. If members feel that they need more information than the government's response from officials as we study specific topics, they should absolutely request a briefing from officials or documents related to that specific topic. Specificity will make sure that we're not wasting the time of folks who are working to keep Canadians healthy. We can get briefings.

Going back to the previous year on this committee, every time a member asked for briefings, we got briefings. We had briefings all the time, and they were invaluable for what we were trying to do, so we can get briefings. We can get that important information to move forward, to do our jobs, to study the impacts of COVID-19.

I like fishing as well, but fishing belongs in our beautiful oceans, rivers and lakes, not in the House of Commons or in a House of Commons committee.

Let's study COVID-19 without forcing Canada's hard-working public servants, the folks who are working hard to keep all of us safe, to spend hours and hours sifting through old emails and documents for the sake of somewhat partisan games, Mr. Chair.

I just want to address specifically one of the things in the first motion and the second motion, and that's personal protective equipment. The government, including so many of these public servants who are extremely busy, everyone is still working around the clock to make sure that we have that personal protective equipment, the PPE that we need to fight COVID-19.

• (1300)

Our first priority in this pandemic was getting equipment and supplies directly into the hands of our front-line health care workers to keep them safe. Recognizing the challenges and the opportunities of an increasingly competitive global environment—my gosh, Mr. Chair—Canadian industry stepped up in a huge way to support our procurement efforts.

Mr. Kelloway spoke about this earlier. This is an incredible team Canada effort. Across the whole country, companies have been working with the Government of Canada or working directly with provinces and territories to manufacture and procure PPE. Our government has been focused on solutions for keeping Canadians safe, and these Canadian companies have been doing incredible work.

A while back, I had the opportunity to visit Stanfield's. Mr. d'Entremont will know exactly what I'm talking about, and so will Mr. Kelloway. Stanfield's is, arguably, a historic company in Nova Scotia and it has between 300 and 500 employees on a regular basis. The folks who work there or who were hired over the summer because of COVID-19, as well as the communities of Truro, Bible Hill and the surrounding areas, are hugely proud of this company for doing a pivot, a retrofit. They stepped up and they are producing tons of medical-grade gowns.

They're not alone. Canada has 15 separate contracts with Canadian manufacturers for the production of millions—at last count, I think it was 32 million—of medical-grade gowns. That's just from

Canadian manufacturers. I can show you the website that shows how many medical gowns Canada has procured locally, domestically and internationally. Deliveries are arriving regularly, not just from Stanfield's, but also from Canada Goose, from Roudel Medical in Scarborough, and from George Courey in Laval.

Speaking of PPE, we've already had Canadian companies commit, contribute and deliver over seven million face shields from companies like The Canadian Shield in Kitchener, Ontario or Toronto Stamp, with orders for over 43 million more just from Canadian companies.

We've all heard about the importance of N95 respirator masks, and so many have already been procured for Canadian front-line workers. I am particularly impressed with Quebec companies that have stepped up for this procurement, companies like Medicom, with 20 million N95 respirator masks and 24 million surgical masks per year for the next 10 years, so we're protecting Canadians now and we will work to protect Canadians into the future.

Also a huge thanks goes to New Brunswick's LuminUltra for stepping up and producing enough reagent for 500,000 more tests per week to help meet Canada's needs now and well into 2021.

We have talked about ventilators. I know Marcus loves to hear about ventilators. Canadian companies have delivered hundreds of ventilators.

To go back to transparency for a moment, we talk about that a lot, the accountability and the transparency, and yes, it is critically important. Canadians, I'm sure, know that we are in a fierce global competition for PPE produced beyond our borders. We need to make sure that we, as a country, are cautious about disclosing certain information on specific contracts or suppliers that could jeopardize Canada's supply chains for these life-saving products. But I will say to the committee that whenever possible we are publicly announcing contracts through this pandemic. We will continue to do so. You may have noticed, Mr. Chair, that we're posting this online. Important details on orders and deliveries of PPE are posted online.

Let me reiterate. I firmly believe that it's important to Canadians and it should be important to all of us to continue focusing our efforts on COVID-19. We truly feel we need to do so with some specificity. I think we have an incredible opportunity here to work together to undertake a focused, meaningful study that will benefit Canadians now and moving forward. I will ask all of my colleagues in all parties to please do what we've done in the past and work together on this. Let's be specific; let's pinpoint our focus and let's get to work.

Mr. Chair, I'm trying to find a possible way forward here, as Mr. Davies suggested.

• (1305)

If I could, Mr. Chair, I'll read what I have here as a suggested amended motion:



That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Health commence a study on the emergency situation facing Canadians in light of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that this study evaluate, review and examine all issues relevant to this situation; and that this study begin no later than...

Obviously, we would have to change the date. I would suggest, for argument's sake, that we add a week to that.

...that the Committee table its findings in the House upon completion; that the government provide a response to these findings within 30 sitting days, and that evidence and documentation received by the Committee during its study of the Canadian response to the outbreak of the corona virus commenced during the 1st Session of the 43rd Parliament be taken into consideration by the Committee in the current study, and that each party be entitled to one witness per one hour witness panel, and two witnesses per two hour witness panel; and that in order to fully study this emergency situation, we request pertinent documents, topic by topic, after hearing from witnesses and ascertaining which documents are relevant to a productive study of the issue.

Mr. Chair, I'm penciling that together to the best of my ability. I'm not sure if that speaks to what Mr. Davies suggested.

Perhaps what we could do, out of respect for the members.... I'm not sure if you are willing or able...or if the committee wishes to take a five-minute suspension to have folks take a look at that. I don't want to, by any means, handcuff anyone.

That is pretty much taken verbatim from the Conservative motion, and then modified based on the things Don was saying to find a way forward.

Mr. Chair, I seek your guidance on that. Would you permit maybe a five-minute look at that?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** On that point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** It wasn't a point of order.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** It's pretty straightforward what the Liberals are trying to do. They're trying to remove the document production order from the motion.

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner, you have not been recognized.

I may have been on mute, so I apologize.

I asked Mr. Fisher if he has in fact moved that amendment. He expressed it as a proposed amendment, so I'm asking if he did in fact propose it.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Sure, I'll propose that motion.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. Did you move it or not?

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Yes, I'll move that as an amendment to the motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

Ms. Rempel Garner, could you proceed with your point of order, please?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I would ask whether this is a substantive enough motion to make it a separate motion, because it has completely removed the document production component of the original motion. With regard to the motion at hand, I think that what the Liberals are doing is basically stripping out the document production orders, as they are doing in other committees right now.

I would argue that it's enough of a change that it's its own motion and that we should proceed with my motion. It's not like it's amending what documents are produced in what period of time; it's saying that no documents will be produced.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** On a point of order, that's not actually—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Can I finish? I still have the floor.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Yes, but you're not on a point of order. You still have the floor, and I'm asking for a point of order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Fisher, Ms. Rempel Garner was recognized on a point of order.

I would ask Ms. Rempel Garner to finish her point.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Sure. I'm asking, Chair, whether it's a substantive motion in and of itself. It's not an amendment to the document production.

The other—

• (1310)

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** It is, actually.

Mr. Chair, I did ask for a point of order.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I'm finishing my point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Yours wasn't a point of order.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Yes, it is.

Actually, Mr. Fisher, when you're talking about the substance of a motion and whether or not it's admissible, that's actually the definition of a point of order. Thank you.

The other point I would raise on this is that I'd like some clarity on the way this motion is worded now, and I don't need a week to look at it. It actually doesn't have any clarity on who is determining the relevancy of the documents. To me, that's problematic as well. It has also removed all of the stipulations around what would be confidential and what wouldn't. That's also, I think, such a substantive amendment that it would be its own motion. I would like clarity on that point, too, because it seems like a pretty big change from the original form and spirit of the motion.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Mr. Fisher, do you wish to respond to the points raised in this point of order?

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Again, I wasn't removing the documents. I was suggesting that they would be determined, as Mr. Davies had suggested, when they are needed, based on things that we are studying.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Could I have a point of order, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Mr. Davies, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Don Davies:** I'm not quite sure that Mr. Fisher has properly characterized what I said, but I do appreciate the attempt to deal with production. At least we have something on the table.

I'm wondering about this. The first part of the motion, I suspect, may be largely acceptable to the committee members, but the second part is clearly something that is going to require some focus. Can we get that second part on production sent around in writing?

**The Chair:** Certainly. Mr. Fisher has moved the amendment. I take it as a valid amendment.

Mr. Fisher, have you—

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Can we take five minutes to have that sent around to all our colleagues here, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Sure, but before we do that, let me observe that we have passed the normal termination time of our meeting. I am asking if it is the will of the committee to carry on. Is there any dissent?

There is no dissent, so we will carry on.

Mr. Thériault, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I want there to be a time limit. The Liberals have been talking non-stop for two hours, and only now are they moving an amendment.

We must remain serious on this committee. If we want people to collaborate and work together, we should be serious and respect the time limits we are given, not pull moves like this at the last minute. If the Liberals had been willing to work today, they would have moved an amendment right at the start rather than talking non-stop and repeating themselves.

So, Mr. Chair, if we have an extension, I'd like it to be for a set period of time. Then we can adjourn and reconvene later on, when each of us has done what they have to do.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Thériault.

I do not have the option to arbitrarily terminate the meeting, unless there is excessive disorder or there are physical impediments, such as not having access to the resources. It is up to the committee whether or not to continue. I have asked the committee if there is any dissent to carry on. It's up to you as members of the committee to do so or not.

Did you wish to make a motion to adjourn at this time? What is your...? Please clarify your point.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault:** I propose a 15-minute extension.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I think that would require.... It's an amendment to adjourn at a specific time. I'm not sure if that's in order at this time.

Mr. Clerk, I wonder if you could give me some advice on this.

We'll suspend for a couple of minutes while I talk to the clerk. Thank you very much.

• (1315)

(Pause)

• (1315)

**The Chair:** Thank you to the committee. We shall resume.

A motion to adjourn with condition is a substantive motion. Since there is already a motion, as well as an amendment, on the floor, a substantive motion at this time would not be in order.

Mr. Thériault, you're certainly welcome to raise a motion of adjournment when the time comes. We do not have the will of the committee to adjourn at this time. We will carry on now with Ms. Sidhu.

Please go ahead. We are now dealing with Mr. Fisher's amendment.

Does the committee wish to have some time, as Mr. Fisher suggested, to receive the amendment and consider it?

**Mr. John Barlow:** Mr. Chair, just on a point of order on that, we did ask for clarification as to whether Mr. Fisher's proposed amendment should be a motion in and of itself. I think it substantially changes the motion we're talking about. It completely neuters the initial motion on the floor. I think we're looking for some direction from the chair to make a ruling as to whether the amendment from Mr. Fisher is indeed an amendment or a substantive enough document that it should be a motion on its own.

**The Chair:** I believe I already ruled on that. It is a legitimate amendment. It's really up to the mover of the amendment to decide to what extent it seeks to modify the original motion. I believe it is in order. I believe we do have an amendment on the floor.

My question again to the committee is whether we wish to suspend for five or 10 minutes while the amendment is distributed.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Mr. Chair, I have the floor now. Is that right?

**The Chair:** No, we're still dealing with the matter of whether or not we are going to suspend and so forth. After we resolve this, we will certainly go to you because you were next on the list.

Is there anyone who objects to our suspending for, say, 10 minutes while the amendment is distributed?

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Mr. Chair, given that we still have to take a look at the amendment, and given the concerns that have been expressed by our colleague, why don't we adjourn this meeting until our next meeting, and that will give us an opportunity to take a look at the amendments being proposed? Also, we are getting close to question period, if I understand correctly.

That's a motion to adjourn.

**The Chair:** We have on the floor a motion to adjourn.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Mr. Chair, I put a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**The Chair:** Mr. Van Bynen has already moved that motion.

Is it the will of the committee to adjourn at this time? Anyone who dissents, please speak up.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** You need to call a recorded vote, Mr. Chair.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel Garner is calling for a recorded vote. It is within the rules to pass something if we can get agreement on a matter of division. However, you have requested a recorded vote; therefore, we will ask the clerk to please go ahead and take a recorded vote on the motion to adjourn.

**The Chair:** Thank you to the committee. The vote is to adjourn at this time. Therefore, I declare this meeting adjourned.

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