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Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

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Tuesday, October 13, 2020

Chair: Mr. Bob Bratina



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• (1110)

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Naaman Sugrue): Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can receive motions only for the election of the chair.

[*Translation*]

The clerk cannot receive other motions, cannot entertain points of order nor participate in debate.

[*English*]

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party. I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): I would like to move that Bob Bratina be the chair of the committee.

The Clerk: Are there any further motions for the election of the chair?

Pursuant to the House order of Wednesday, September 23, I will now proceed to a recorded division.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 12; nays 0)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Bob Bratina to be duly elected chair of the committee.

I invite Bob Bratina to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.)): Thank you very much, everyone.

Thanks to the previous group of members. We had quite a remarkable, although truncated, session, and I was really pleased with how we got along.

I'm encouraged by the new members who are joining us now. Thank you very much for showing your willingness to participate in what we think is a very vital committee with important work to do.

My next order of business is to hear nominations for the first vice-chair of the committee. The nomination will be by the Conservatives.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): I nominate Cathy McLeod.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Vidal that Cathy McLeod be elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions for first vice-chair?

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): If you need a second for that, I'll second the motion.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Vidal that Cathy McLeod be elected first vice-chair of the committee.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to the House Order of Wednesday, September 23, 2020, I will now proceed to a recorded division.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): May I speak? Someone was supposed to nominate me, Mr. Chair.

The Clerk: I believe it will be for the position of second vice-chair, Ms. Bérubé. First we will elect the first vice-chair. Then we will elect the second vice-chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're only doing the first vice-chair.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: First we will proceed with the election of the first vice-chair.

[*English*]

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Cathy McLeod elected first vice-chair of the committee.

The Chair: Thank you.

Welcome, Cathy.

Next we have the election and we require a nomination for second vice-chair, a member of the Bloc.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to nominate Sylvie Bérubé to be second vice-chair of the committee.

• (1115)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): I will second the nomination of Madame Bérubé for second vice-chair.

[*Translation*]

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.

It has been moved by Mr. Anandasangaree that Ms. Bérubé be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

[*English*]

Pursuant to the House order of Wednesday, September 23, 2020, I will now proceed to a recorded division.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Ms. Sylvie Bérubé duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much and welcome again, Madame Bérubé.

I've had a request for a nomination for a third vice-chair. I'll ask Mr. van Koeverden to make that nomination.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to nominate Ms. Mumilaaq Qaqqaq as the third vice-chair.

The Clerk: I'll interrupt for a moment. If we could suspend briefly, I would like to confer with the chair for a moment.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I have a quick point of order, and perhaps it could be part of the conferring. I don't object, but I wonder if there are issues here with the Standing Orders. Do any Standing Orders need to change for us to proceed?

The Clerk: My advice to the committee is that this could be done at any other time. I would need to come back to the committee after doing some research as to whether or not this could be done in a formal way. As Mrs. McLeod points out, the Standing Orders stipulate a number of chair positions for committees, and to my knowledge PROC did not report back to the House on that.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, we've had some discussion leading up to this. I'll ask Mr. Anandasangaree to reflect on what we determined.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Clerk, the understanding I have is that the committee is able to establish a third vice-chair if it so pleases. The challenge is that the Board of Internal Economy does not have the proper resources to offer a stipend to the third vice-chair. That is the understanding I have.

Ms. Blaney, I think you may have faced this in other areas. As the whip of the NDP, I don't know if you're able to weigh in on this. Our understanding is that what we are doing is completely within our purview. The only issue here is the stipend that is often offered to the first and second vice-chairs.

• (1120)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): I can add to this conversation. First of all, this is unexpected. I didn't ex-

pect this conversation. It is one that happened at PROC. Of course, because of prorogation, it was not able to move forward. I don't have any answers about the Board of Internal Economy. I do agree that one of the biggest concerns we had was, of course, not about the stipend but about the reality of vice-chairs and chairs. They are often sent information from stakeholder groups, and because one of the parties is not recognized as a vice-chair, they often are not attached in those information exchanges.

That is all I can add to the conversation. It is something, of course, that we continue to deal with. I can't answer what the committee can do. That is at the discretion of the committee. However, I would of course be happy to support it.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: From a precedential point of view, in the last committee we did have a third vice-chair. That was something we had agreed to as well.

The Chair: If I may, I had a very good conversation with Ms. Qaqqaq just yesterday, as a matter of fact. I wanted to assure her that we were quite willing to accommodate a third vice-chair, but unfortunately the question of the stipend is completely out of our hands. What I think we wanted to reassure Ms. Qaqqaq about was that she would have full participation in the committee work and, as Ms. Blaney suggested, would receive information that might otherwise not come without the chair being present.

Mrs. McLeod, do you have anything further that concerns you about this from the discussion?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I certainly appreciate the comments made by my NDP colleague in terms of the importance of receiving information, and the advice of the clerk, who wanted to do a bit more research. I would like to see this happen in terms of having a recognition that Ms. Qaqqaq will receive the appropriate information, but I also don't think it's appropriate in this case to potentially violate the Standing Orders. Can we just leave it perhaps until the next meeting, by which time I presume we would have a definitive answer?

Then, if there are no changes that need to be made and if it's up to the committee to support it, I'd be very happy to vote at that time.

The Chair: Gary, do you agree with that?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: I agree, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. What we'll do then is have the clerk delve into this further. We did some preliminary examination and felt that we were on safe ground, but if any further assurance is required, I don't think waiting for one meeting will impact negatively on the business of the committee. With the committee's permission, I as the chair will ask the clerk to confirm the situation regarding the election of a third vice-chair.

Is that okay, Mr. Clerk?

The Clerk: Yes. I'll do so.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that I believe, Mr. Anandasangaree, we need to get the business of the routine motions out of the way. Are you prepared to move that?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: I am, Mr. Chair. If you'll permit me, I'll read the routine motions from the beginning.

The Chair: Please do.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: I move, and this is the same as the one we adopted previously:

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.

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five members, namely the Chair and one member from each recognized party; and that the subcommittee work in a spirit of collaboration.

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

• (1125)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Excuse me. I'm sorry to interrupt. This may be a point of order; I'm not sure.

Mr. Chair, perhaps you could just advise me. There are some changes I would like to make to the routine motions and I'm wondering if you would like me to put forward amendments during or after.

The Chair: Let's let Mr. Anandasangaree go through the list and then we'll come back to that.

The Clerk: Yes. Amendments would be moved after the motion has been moved.

The Chair: Thanks, Clerk.

Go ahead, Gary.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: The motions continue:

That witnesses be given ten minutes for their opening statement; that, at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated six minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows for the first round: Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois, New Democratic Party; and that for the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows: Conservative Party, five minutes, Liberal Party, five minutes, Conservative Party, five minutes, Liberal Party, five minutes, Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes, New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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 (a) the notice be filed with the clerk of the committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from

Monday to Friday; (b) 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 (c) notices received after the deadline hour or on non-business days be deemed to have been received during the next business day and that when the committee is travelling on official business, no substantive motions may be moved.

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.

The Chair: That is the suite of routine motions.

Ms. Blaney, would you like to go ahead with your comments or amendments?

• (1130)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Absolutely. Thank you, everyone. It's wonderful to be here with all of you today. I was on INAN for a couple of years with some of the members who are here today. It's always good to be back.

I have a couple of recommendations based, of course, on the decisions that PROC made. As the mother committee, I think it's important for us to have those discussions and reflect what that committee is doing.

The first part was in, I believe, the third section, regarding a meeting without a quorum. One of the changes would be where it says, "one member of the opposition and one member of the government". Because we have a couple of opposition parties, we thought it would be more appropriate to have "two government members" and "two opposition members".

That is one amendment that I am putting forward.

I don't know whether you would like me to put forward all of the amendments at once. I will do that if everyone is all right with that.

The Chair: Yes, sure, go ahead.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: The second amendment—

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order. Do you have the original document to recirculate?

I'm in our digital binder, and it's not there. It just helps when we're referencing sections that we have something to read as we go through them.

If it could be circulated, that would be helpful because I see it's not in the digital binder.

The Clerk: I can recirculate the routine motions from the previous session now, which I understand are identical to the motion just moved by Mr. Anandasangaree.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Yes. They were according to what I read.

The second part is around, I believe, the fourth section, which is with regard to time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses. I am proposing two amendments.

One is to take the time that we're allowing witnesses to present from 10 minutes to five. This is what PROC did to make sure that people were very clear in their discussions. It would leave more time for questioning.

The second amendment is for the second round of questioning, which is currently Conservative, five; Liberal, five; Conservative, five; Liberal, five. Our recommendation—and this is what PROC has done and several other committees as well—is to change that to Conservative, five; Liberal, five; Bloc, two and half; NDP, two and half; Conservative, five; and Liberal, five.

Those are the amendments.

The Chair: Does anyone have any comments? I'm looking around the table.

Gary, does anything stand out for you?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: I just have a quick question.

Is this different from what Ms. Qaqqaq sent out in terms of her notice of motion? Is it slightly different?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: They are all the same. The only one that is different is the 10 minutes. She recommended keeping the 10 minutes, which I think is a discussion for the committee to have. I am open to that. I just thought it was important to also reflect what PROC has done. I know that some committees have moved it down to seven and half minutes. I can't answer which committees off the top of my head. I think that's an important discussion for the committee.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: We're in agreement in terms of the proposed amendments as brought forward by Ms. Blaney today.

The Chair: Are there any further comments?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: We certainly agree with the later two amendments. My only question is.... I know that within this committee, when I've been on it in the past, the cutting off of witnesses is sometimes very sensitive. Do we want to consider seven versus five, or do we just allow the chair some flexibility depending on the circumstances?

Mr. Chair, I would look to your comments on that issue and to those of the other committee members.

The Chair: Those are good comments. It actually came up on occasion that I was criticized for not sticking to the time. However, it was almost impossible to interrupt. This was not Mike Pence just dragging on the debate. This was substantive material that you just couldn't interrupt.

I would say, in terms of 10 minutes versus five minutes for opening remarks, that sometimes it does drag on a bit. Points are repeated. I think that if you are coming before committee, there should be a concise presentation because what I would say to all of our witnesses is that things that you may have wished to bring forward in

your opening remarks may well come in subsequently within the questioning.

Okay, Adam, you would like to add to that. Go ahead, and then we'll go to Marcus.

• (1135)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: It's not a point of order; it's just a suggestion.

I don't know if this has ever been done in another committee before. However, by saying five to seven minutes, you're encouraging five but saying seven is okay. Perhaps at that five and half minutes you give a 90-second warning so that it's not an abrupt cut-off because sometimes it was like, "Times up; you're done. Sorry, no more." With 90 seconds, people can then choose to wrap up.

By saying between five and seven minutes, we can politely say that five is requested but seven is allowed.

The Chair: I don't know how we make five to seven minutes a process point. In terms of the abrupt cut-offs that were made, I remember very well that these were occasions when people had gone somewhat beyond 10 minutes. It really hurts the questioning process because we have budgeted time for everybody. If the witness is going on and on, it impacts the actual conducting of the business within.

We'll come back to it in a moment. I would prefer five minutes. I think you can say a lot in five minutes.

Marcus Powlowski, you had your hand up.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): I had my hand up before some of the earlier remarks were made—maybe I'm duplicating things—but this came up in HESA, which I'm also a member of.

With respect to Ms. Blaney's proposal, interestingly enough, Don Davies of the NDP disagreed with that somewhat, saying it's not a hill he wants to die on—and I agree with him—but in some cases five minutes may not be enough for a difficult subject. In questioning, you only get six minutes for questions and answers, and there might be some concepts that take more than five minutes to explain and do a thorough job.

The second thing I'd like to point out is that my predecessor, Don Rusnak, who was on this committee, apparently got quite upset with the fact that when elders came before the committee to give testimony, they were cut off early. This was a sign of disrespect.

In HESA we made it five to 10 minutes, at the discretion of the chair. What we wanted with the five minutes was to get in all the questions and not be cut off early. However, I think there may be times when we want to give them more than five minutes.

I'm not willing to die on this. I don't mind one way or the other.

The Chair: Just to conclude, all the witnesses are required to give us a preview of their remarks, so we should have the text of everything they wish to say. Sometimes there's a cultural issue where someone's travelled a long way—from, let's say, the High Arctic—and then they're in Ottawa presenting to a committee. I think they would feel that since they're going to be here for the duration, they want us to hear everything they have to say. That doesn't mesh with how we structure our committees, so that could be a problem as well. The thing I would say to all witnesses is what I just said: Everything they wish to present is in the hands of the committee, so if they don't get to it, rest assured that we will have the information and that it may come up in questioning as well.

Gary, did you want to weigh in?

Mr. Gary Vidal: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are a couple of things I would suggest here.

My experience in our prior year here was that there seemed to be some confusion in the minds of the witnesses regarding how much time they had. We started with 10 minutes, and then at some of our meetings we limited the presentation time to five minutes. I'm not sure that was well communicated to the witnesses. They prepared 10 minutes of remarks and then we were cutting them off at five minutes. I think whichever way we go, we need to make sure that this is clearly communicated to the witnesses so that they know what time frame they're working with.

To your comment, Mr. Chair, about the witnesses providing us with their remarks in writing, that happened at times but it sure wasn't consistent. Again, if that's the expectation, we need to make sure those people have communicated to them very clearly that their remarks are expected to be in our hands.

As a final comment, I think the five minutes for some of the witnesses we had at our committee is very limiting. I think five minutes is a really short time for some of these people, who come a long way and have very important things to say. Personally, I would be in favour of 10 minutes, but I could compromise at seven and a half or something like that and be happy with that. Again, it's not a hill to die on, but I think there's a respect factor for the witnesses we have at our committee, who have some very good things to say.

• (1140)

The Chair: Are there any further comments?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: I just wanted to add that I'm open to seven and a half minutes, if somebody wants to propose that, but as a reminder, the discretion of the chair is still in the motion. If somebody comes from far away and it's our witness, I think it's important for all of us MPs to say that we believe this witness will need more time and to do some work with the chair to make sure of this, especially if we want to be respectful of cultural practices. That's my final statement on this.

The Chair: Go ahead, Gary.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: I suggest that we land on maybe six minutes, with discretion to the chair. Sometimes we have panels of three, for example, and if each one gets 10 minutes, obviously we really shorten the question rounds. Depending on the panel, depending on how many people and depending on other circumstances, I think you, Mr. Chair, may use your discretion as appropriate, and we'll give you that flexibility. However, let's say, as a baseline, six minutes.

It may be hard for us to impose a pre-written submission rule, just because sometimes we only reach out to our witnesses a day or two ahead of time. Maybe we could encourage witnesses to submit written documents but for the most part keep it as is, with the six minutes and some flexibility for others.

The Chair: What do you say then if we go with a soft six minutes—you can put that in a procedure paper—on the understanding that we're not going to jump on anybody once the six minutes have passed? However, everyone needs to consider that the functioning of the committee includes the rounds of questioning. We're all happy—I think most of us are—to extend meetings if that needs to be the case.

My experience over the years chairing things has been that concise, well-functioning meetings are the most effective. I can remember as a mayor or as a councillor in Hamilton doing meetings that went on for hours, and honestly, nothing of substance came out of those meetings. It was probably more a reflection of us as councillors. I hope you see what I mean. If we can follow the rules as closely as possible with the consideration and courtesy that we need to extend to our guests, I think if we're all in agreement, we should land in the right place.

Gary, would you move a six-minute presentation time?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Yes, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Do we have any comments on that, in view of what's been said?

Are we all good to go with six minutes with consideration?

(Subamendment agreed to)

The Chair: Ms. Blaney, do you have anything further on the routine motions?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: No, I proposed all three and of course the one friendly subamendment I'm happy to support. Hopefully we can get this last vote done for the remainder and move on.

• (1145)

The Chair: Okay. On motions on studies, I see hands up for Mr. Anandasangaree, Ms. Zann and Mr. Viersen.

Okay, I think I have an order, and it starts with Mr. Anandasangaree.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Chair, I think we have to vote on an amendment and on a main motion.

The Chair: I'm sorry.

Do we need to take a formal vote, Mr. Clerk?

The Clerk: For clarification, we are currently on the amendment of Ms. Blaney to the routine motions moved by Mr. Anandasangaree. Any member can request a recorded vote, but if the committee—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I am not requesting a recorded vote.

The Clerk: If the committee chooses to adopt it unanimously, then we can proceed back to the routine motions having been adopted.

The Chair: Okay, as the Speaker would say in the House, due to the nature of the current technology, I will hear from only those who are against unanimous consideration.

I see no noes. Mr. Clerk, we'll assume there is unanimous approval of that.

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

Now we're going—

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: On a point of order, I know that members on this committee did a lot of virtual meetings, whereas some other committees didn't. However, it's a different situation to get the eye of the chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: How do you create a reasonable process in terms of the recognition of order? Certainly we have many motions that have been presented. How do you manage the order of people who are going to choose to speak to different issues? Should we have a more general discussion first before we get into any specific motions being put on the table?

The Chair: I think the point is that the chair is in charge of the speaking order, and I have two possibilities. One is the grid where I see hands, and then there's the blue hand, the "raise hand" function, where I see there are two raised hands, and now a third.

Mr. Anandasangaree, when I thought we were done with the previous routine motions—

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: We weren't done, though, so of course we weren't putting our hands up to catch your eye. I guess I just want to have that conversation.

The Chair: Yes, that's fine. Really, it's the chair's prerogative on the speaking order, as I said.

Preferably, blue hands will go up on my screen here. I also acknowledge raised hands. I guess we'll have to see how it goes. Typically what would happen—and I'll ask the clerk to comment in a moment—is that someone might get upset that they've been waving away over in the corner and I never got to them. That's fair. I mean, chairs can make mistakes as well.

Mr. Clerk, do you have a comment with regard to this conversation?

The Clerk: I am happy to also provide support in terms of taking a speaking list and noting who has raised their hands in what order.

I'm happy to speak with you about that and how you, as chair, would like to coordinate that going forward.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Cathy, in this committee's experience, when we were doing it live in Ottawa, the previous clerk did exactly what our clerk said. I would look over and I would see her list, which usually would check with mine. Sometimes, when a topic gets hot and heavy, you might start to concentrate on a speaking point and miss the other point, because the chair...

I think meetings that have decorum have it because they're well chaired, and the reason they're well chaired is that the chair does the simple thing: He keeps the speaking order and allows people to speak within the context of what's before them. I'm not sure whether we'll ever be back in the live format again. I hope we will. However, perhaps even in this format, the clerk will also assist me, and we can do that with a speakers list that appears in text on my screen as well.

Having said all that, can we move on now to the studies and motions?

• (1150)

The Clerk: The current matter of business is on the routine motions, as amended.

The Chair: On the routine motions as amended, as the Speaker says in the House on unanimous consent, I will only hear whether someone is opposed to unanimous consent.

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

The Chair: I have Mr. Anandasangaree, Mr. Battiste, Mr. Powlowski, Mr. Viersen, Ms. McLeod.

Ms. Zann, I'm sorry. You were before Mr. Powlowski, but not with a blue hand. I'll put the list as Mr. Battiste, Ms. Zann, Mr. Powlowski, Mr. Viersen and Mrs. McLeod.

Mr. Anandasangaree, will you go ahead, please?

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I can't find the blue hand. I've had my hand up for some time now.

The Chair: Yes, I saw your hand and then I got distracted in going to the blue hands.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Where are the blue hands? I don't understand.

The Chair: Look on the participants. There's a thing with two heads on the bottom of your screen. It says, "participants". Click the arrow on that.

Ms. Lenore Zann: I see, and then there are other hands in there.

The ones where it says "reactions", is that considered a hand too?

The Chair: No, that's just thumbs-up, thumbs-down, party time....

Ms. Lenore Zann: That's what I was using as my hand. There's a hand in there.

The Chair: No. Try the other one.

On the bottom of participants, when you click it, there will be a white screen and then on the bottom right-hand side, it says "raise hand".

Ms. Lenore Zann: Got it. Thank you. Sorry about that.

The Chair: No problem.

Gary, please go ahead.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously there are a number of very important studies we should look at. I know we had an elaborate discussion in the last Parliament and we had a number of studies on the docket. I know that because of COVID we weren't able to get to them. I noticed on the notice of motions that a lot of them have come back.

Mr. Clerk, I don't know if you were able to send the notice I sent this morning, but there is one study I would like to propose as the first study to be undertaken. That is with respect to the recovery.

If I may read this, it says:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of the opportunities to: support Indigenous communities, businesses, and individuals through a second wave of COVID-19; facilitate Indigenous communities re-opening in a safe and responsible manner; build resiliency with an equitable and sustainable economic recovery plan; that the scope of the study take into consideration First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities and individuals, including those living off reserve and in urban centres; health, including mental health supports, supports for Indigenous organizations, businesses, and communities, that the committee also study measures undertaken so far through partnership between Indigenous communities and the Government of Canada as well as further opportunities for partnership during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the recovery phase; that evidence collected and received during the committee's study on the Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic from the 1st session of the 43rd Parliament be taken into consideration and used as evidence for this study and subsequent report to the House, that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

I'd like to note, Mr. Chair, that this has many of the elements that are outlined in Ms. Bérubé's notice of motion that was presented, I

think, last week. As you're well aware, the numbers within indigenous communities, and in first nations particularly, are rising significantly. There are 792 confirmed positive COVID-19 cases, 118 active cases, 64 hospitalizations and 13 deaths, and we see that basically across the country. In B.C. there are 169 cases, in Alberta 315, and so on. As a percentage, I think we did relatively well in the first wave, but we are quite worried about the second wave. I think it would be prudent of us to look at the government response, but also at how we support the businesses and so on that have been affected significantly on an ongoing basis, to support indigenous communities.

I hope this can be the first study we undertake. It will be relatively short because we did do quite a bit of work at the outset. Although there was no report from that, I think a lot of the information gathered there can be used to report on this. We're proposing between four and six meetings to be able to undertake this study.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Does everyone have a copy of that motion? It's quite lengthy. I had to dig it out myself to keep everything straight.

The Clerk: It was distributed by email not long in advance of the meeting's start time.

The Chair: Okay.

Will we take submissions for further motions now or shall we discuss that motion?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: On a point of order, Chair, just as a newer stepping-in member, I'm wondering about the process.

In other committees that I've been on, I understood that this might be a general conversation, but then it would go to the subcommittee, and the subcommittee would come back with recommendations for the whole committee. I'm just wondering if that's going to be the process today and if we're just going to have general discussions or if we're going to allow the subcommittee to do its work and then vote on that when the subcommittee has done its work.

The Chair: You're quite right. Thanks for reminding me. We've been away from this for a long time.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you.

The Chair: Once again, Mr. Battiste, you have a motion that you'd like to bring forward.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Yes. I do agree with COVID being top of mind in terms of priorities that we need to look at for indigenous communities across Canada.

One of the most disheartening things that we've been seeing across Canada over the past few months is more heightened acts of racism and discrimination. It's really disheartening to talk about, but I think it's important. One of the things that Nelson Mandela once said was that education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.

We talked about treaty commissions when we met in the previous government with this committee. I'd like to put back on the table that we really need to look at treaty commissions. There is some great work going on across several provinces on anti-racism by creating awareness and creating the premise that we're all in this together and that we're all treaty people. These are things that are going on in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Nova Scotia.

I'd really like to introduce a motion:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), and given the evolving roles and responsibilities of Treaty Commissions across the provinces, that the committee undertake a study on how Treaty Commissions be utilized to educate and create awareness of the Indigenous history and rights in Canada; that the new national treaty commissioner's office be designed and established with Indigenous partners with the goals of creating rights awareness, supporting reconciliation efforts and implementing indigenous rights in Canada; that the witness list include representatives from Treaty Commissions in Manitoba, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan, rights holders, academics, and officials from the Ministry of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs; and that the committee report its findings to the House.

I think that would be a good starting point for discussion after we talk about COVID. These are consistent with what's being suggested in the calls to action, both for the missing and murdered indigenous women as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I think it's consistent with what our government needs to look at in ensuring that we're taking the proper steps towards reconciliation.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Battiste.

Next we have Ms. Zann, Mr. Powlowski, Mr. Viersen, Ms. McLeod and Mr. Melillo.

Lenore, please go ahead.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to say thank you to my colleagues.

Both of those studies sound really interesting. At this particular time in our history, I think we're at a tipping point where we need to do more to change the way things have always been and to be able to treat first nations, indigenous, Inuit and Métis people with more respect. We have to really get to the bottom of how we change systemic racism in Canada to make life better for all indigenous peoples.

On that note, I have a motion I'd like to make regarding a study. It is regarding the quality of health care for indigenous peoples and the impacts of systemic racism on access to equality of that health care.

I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of the role of the federal government in ensuring quality access to healthcare for Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the impacts of systemic racism on both the access to and quality of healthcare for First Nations, Inuit and Métis; that the committee include the testimony of Indigenous Peoples living on reserve, off reserve and in urban centers, as well as local Indigenous and non-Indigenous health providers; that the committee take into consideration the testimony of Indigenous physicians and patients; that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

In closing, regarding that motion, we've been seeing too much in the news lately of how our indigenous people are treated. Sometimes, it is to the point where they are not receiving the proper treatment, and it has ended in death. I'm sure some of the cases that have been captured on video are just a drop in the barrel. There are many more. We need to really do our due diligence in making sure that this practice stops and that we look after everybody.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I have a point of order, Chair. I am not totally clear.

Right now, of course, there was that ambiguity around notices of motions and whether they can be received. We're not debating these motions. I would presume that what we're doing right now is receiving these notices of motions in a formal way, some that might have been submitted before and some perhaps that have not been submitted. Is that accurate? I note we are not debating the motions. I wasn't sure if they were appropriately received by the committee.

Can you clarify for me? We are just receiving a number of notices of motions, currently.

The Chair: You correctly figured that out because we're discussing motions that we'll put on notice. We will have to deal with each motion as it is moved, and then can't consider another motion until the first motion has been voted on or withdrawn.

I'll let the speakers go on, in the sense that this is a general discussion on the first gathering of this committee, and then we'll move on to the more substantive matter of moving motions. Is that okay, Cathy?

Ms. Lenore Zann: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Sorry, I just want to come back to—

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: What we're doing right now is that the committee is receiving notices of motions, Gary's and the others', and then there will come a time.... These motions are not being moved; they're being received.

The Chair: Right.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you.

The Chair: That's my expectation of the meeting so far today.

Ms. Zann, did you have a point of order?

Ms. Lenore Zann: No, I just wanted to say that these motions were already distributed. Mine was distributed.

The Chair: Yes, thanks very much.

We go to Mr. Powlowski.

• (1205)

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: We're presenting a whole list of motions or notices of motions, and there is an order here, as you may see. I agree with COVID being number one, and I agree with number two being the treaty commissioner. To add to the list, which I'm sure will be discussed, I have yet another notice of motion. This one is regarding food security in the north. Like many of you, especially those of you like Mr. Melillo who looks after fly-in communities, I like this one.

The notice of motion is:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), and given the high cost of nutritional goods and reduced access to non-perishable goods, including country and traditional foods, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food supply lines especially in fly-in remote communities, the committee undertake a study on identifying ways to improve food security in Northern and remote communities, and the impact of new and expanded programs introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic; that the witness list include representatives from Indigenous, Northern, and remote communities, nutrition experts, officials from relevant departments such as Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; and, that the committee report its findings to the House.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Viersen.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Thanks, Bob.

I have a motion that I'd like to dispose of right from the get-go. It's not so much a notice of motion. In Canada, we have a robust set of human rights. We're also typically pretty polite people. We get along well with our neighbours. We recognize the value of human life. When I saw the videos that came out of Quebec in regard to Joyce Echaquan, I was horrified. Many people from northern communities in my riding were sending me the video and were expressing concern about that and saying, "Arnold you're on this committee. You should do something."

I have a motion that I'd like to deal with right away.

The Chair: Arnold, in view of how we began this—and it could be my fault—I'd prefer to stay in the context of what we've done so far, rather than get to motions. That's the way I had sort of established the list of speakers and I know—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Do you want me to dispose of it at the end, after we deal with this?

The Chair: We're going to come back to all of the motions. Having just started back after all the COVID break and all of that, I just want to hear from all the members of the committee the direction that their motions would take. Then we can, at the committee's best, deal with them however we would like to.

Could you just put that one on hold for now?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Okay. I'm sure I'll jump in if you forget about me.

The Chair: I know you will.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I'll put it on hold for now. Thanks.

The Chair: Okay. You don't forget about me, and I won't forget about you. How's that?

Cathy, I'm sorry. Go ahead, please.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you.

I did do a notice of motion, again, not being sure if it could be received. I know that back in March you had the ministers for the main estimates, but those main estimates were not reported to the House. Therefore, even though you did your work, that work was actually not completed. Of course, the main estimates have been sent to us again, and I think it's imperative that we actually take the time. It has been many, many months since we've heard from the ministers and things have changed dramatically.

The reason I put a date is.... They actually have to be reported back to the House, I understand, in November, but look at what happened last time. They didn't get reported back because, of course, in a matter of days the House was shut down.

I think to be safe, as a matter of priority, let's get the ministers in. Let's talk about the estimates, and let's get those reported back to the House. I find it troubling when a committee doesn't meet its deadlines in terms of reporting the estimates to the House.

Again, I think this should be a priority. It would be one or two meetings, and that would be it.

Thank you.

• (1210)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Chair, may I respond to that?

The Chair: Yes, my understanding is that November 27 is the deadline, but please go ahead, Gary.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: My understanding, Cathy, is that the ministers appeared—if I'm not mistaken—on June 13 or thereabouts, and that it was reported, that it was tabled—

The Chair: It was never reported.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: They were tabled just before prorogation. That's my understanding. We can double-check, or maybe the clerk can double-check. However, I think the ministers look forward to appearing sometime in November, and we can work that out for the current period. Certainly, for the previous timeline, they have appeared, and it has been reported back to the House. We'll get you clarification on the dates for that.

The Chair: My understanding is that the deadline is November 27.

Mr. Gary Vidal: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

It was my understanding that we weren't debating these, that we were just tabling these, putting them on the table, and that we were going to discuss them later. Why are we debating them?

The Chair: That's a good point. Thank you.

We're not going to debate them anymore. We're going to just move along.

Eric, I have you up next.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I did raise my hand a while back, and obviously the discussion has continued. I have two motions that I'd like to table. However, I haven't submitted them already. I just want to know if I'm okay to proceed.

The Chair: Yes, please.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Thank you.

The first one will be similar to that of my colleague from Thunder Bay—Rainy River, touching on food security. I'd like to move that, pursuant—

The Chair: This is a notice of motion.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Yes, it's a notice of motion. Excuse me.

The motion is the following:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a comprehensive study on food security in Northern Canada; that the scope of the study include but not be limited to the structure and efficacy of Nutrition North Canada; that the witness list include but not be limited to northern retailers, representatives from northern municipalities and First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities receiving the subsidy, and experts in the subject of food security; and that the committee report its findings to the House.

Second, given the fact that we are meeting virtually and given that our colleague from Nunavut wasn't able to join us, I'd like to bring notice for a very brief motion:

That the committee recognizes the immediate need for investment in broadband in Northern Canada to ensure remote communities are not left behind during this pandemic, and this be reported to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Gary Vidal, go ahead.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have two notices, which were sent out this morning, that I would like to include in the discussion today. The first one is about the boil water advisories, which have been an item of great attention in the last few weeks. It reads:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee review the process in which the Department of Indigenous Services identifies, prioritizes, develops a plan to address, and then addresses boil water advisories across Canada and ways in which this process can be streamlined and where innovative technologies provided by the private sector could play a role in providing favourable outcomes; and, that the committee will invite officials from the Department of Indigenous Services, the Minister for Indigenous Services, Indigenous community leaders, and industry leaders in innovative methods of water purification; that all meetings for this study be televised; that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

My second motion says:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the implementation of C-92, passed in the 42nd Parliament, focusing on establishing a best-practices approach that is indigenous-led and modeled; and, that the committee invite officials from the Department of Indigenous Services, representatives from all provincial governments, the Minister for Indigenous Services, relevant stakeholders, and Indigenous community leaders who have already begun, and not yet begun the process of assuming jurisdiction of the provision of child and family services; that all meetings for this study be televised; that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that, pursuant

to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Welcome, Ms. Bérubé.

Do you want to say something?

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: I will present the three motions that I sent in last week. The first is as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee resume and complete its study on food security in northern communities undertaken during the first session of the 43rd Parliament; that the evidence and documents received by the committee at that time be considered by the committee during the current session; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

Here is my second motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study and report its recommendations on the basic needs (housing, businesses, drinking water and social services) of Indigenous peoples during COVID-19 and on government measures that could support them in developing a recovery plan that meets their needs; that, in conducting this study, the committee consider the evidence and documents received by the committee during its study of the government's response to the pandemic in the first session of the 43rd Parliament.

My third motion is as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the state of Indigenous rights in Canada with a view to harmonizing policies and supports for Indigenous peoples in Canada with the principles in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and that the committee report its recommendations to the House.

As I told you earlier, I submitted my motions last week, in accordance with the rules. Of course, if you have any questions, I propose that they be debated.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We can refer to the material that Madame Bérubé submitted to us if anyone missed the interpretation. Things were going fairly quickly for interpretation to capture everything, but it was sufficient to get a general understanding and we have the text of the material, as Madame Bérubé has already sent it to us.

Our work now is to determine.... We have everything submitted and everyone has spoken with regard to motions, so I am going to ask the committee how it wants to proceed. Mr. Viersen had a motion he wanted to put forward right now, and I suggest that we have to have unanimous consent to entertain a motion now, because what we're doing at this moment is determining the future of our committee, the business we're going to be doing and the order of reports.

Mr. Powlowski.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: I don't know if it's a point of order, but I see that the NDP didn't have any motions. Is that because Ms. Qaqqaq couldn't get online? I don't think it would be fair to the NDP members if they cannot present any notices of motions because of technical problems. Maybe Ms. Blaney could address that. If that's the case, we ought to consider that and perhaps give them some time to present their notices of motions.

• (1220)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: There were some challenges there, and we are presently working that out with her. Based on the understanding that I had, and we had this conversation, the subcommittee is the one that comes and presents to the whole committee. My understanding today was that we were going to hear the notices of motions, and then the subcommittee would meet and start prioritizing, which would allow time as well for our normal sitting member to present her motion or motions.

I just want to put in my 10¢ with Mr. Viersen. If this is a study, I would like to hear the motion before I give consent to move forward with it.

The Chair: We are dealing with studies.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Chair, I also have some study motions. Can I submit them by electronic means? Fortunately or unfortunately, they're very similar to some of Ms. Zann's. I have one that's very similar, so I'm happy to work with her.

The Chair: With further notices coming from Ms. Qaqqaq and Mr. Viersen, perhaps we should move this to the agenda review subcommittee and determine the future work of the committee.

We'll be here for a long time going over the material that we have, but I'm really pleased that we have heard the directions that our members from all parties are interested in pursuing.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Chair, I would still like to move a motion, which we could dispose of today. It is not a study motion.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Chair, I don't understand what's meant by "not a study motion". Is it a declaration then?

Are we as a committee making a declaration? If that's the case, I'm not actually sure we're able to do that. I don't know if the clerk could give us some clarity on it. I don't believe we're able to do that.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I believe this is the committee business section of the meeting where we can dispose of motions.

The Chair: It sounds substantive so it would require 48 hours. Wouldn't it?

Mr. Clerk, could you clarify?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I believe we can present motions from the floor.

The Clerk: Notices of motions can be submitted, either orally by reading them out in committee or via the clerk, according to the routine motions. For any substantive motion, unanimous consent is required to consider that motion or for that motion to be moved, if the 48-hour notice period has not elapsed.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: What's the definition of "substantive"?

The Chair: Anything is substantive right now, because it's all brand new. It's not based on previous discussions that we've been having and sort of nuanced to something.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: When will our next meeting be because that can kind of determine.... I'd like to get this dealt with before the House resumes next week. I don't think we'll be having another meeting before next week.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, does he not need to move it? Then the decision, as per our NDP colleague, would be whether unanimous consent is given. Is that not what would need to happen?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: My motion would be:

That the committee extend condolences to the family of Joyce Echaquan and express great concern over her treatment and this be reported to the House.

Given the fact that we've seen people pushing us for a while, saying that we sit on this committee so we need to provide a reaction. People are asking, "What is the committee going to do about this?" We can express our great concern and condolences. We will be studying health care impacts and all these kinds of things. What we need to do is express our concern and report this to the House forthwith. I don't think that we should be delaying this any longer.

• (1225)

The Chair: Let me ask Mr. Anandasangaree for a comment.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: If that's the actual wording of the motion, I don't think there's a particular issue. My concerns are threefold. First, I've never had a committee basically declare anything like this, so I'd like clarity on whether we have the ability to do that.

Secondly, with regard to the nature of the file that we're dealing with respecting issues around indigenous people, I think this type of motion could basically be done every other day, given the number of outrageous things that have taken place and continue to take place.

In terms of precedent, I think we have to be careful in that sense.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Are you saying that this is happening every other day?

The Chair: Mr. Viersen, Mr. Anandasangaree has the floor.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: I think what we should focus on is coming up with a study that reflects the need for action. I think that would be a more appropriate response from this committee, to do a study—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: We will be doing that study; that's guaranteed.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: If I may just finish, Arnold, it will be, I think, prudent of us to speak to experts, come back with some comprehensive response on—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Speak to experts...?

The Chair: Mr. Viersen, and everybody in the committee, crosstalk does not enable us to function well.

Mr. Anandasangaree has the floor.

Please, go ahead.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: I think it would be appropriate for us to work on a study that will come back and report accordingly to Parliament. I think that's the appropriate way that this committee should be functioning, and that's probably what's called for in respect of the issues that Mr. Viersen has brought up.

The Chair: Arnold, do you want to comment?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Chair, this is basically a process thing. Unless I get unanimous consent for this, you're telling me that I may not move this motion. At this point, this is a notice of motion:

That the committee extend condolences to the family of Joyce Echaquan and express great concern over her treatment and this be reported to the House.

I hope to dispose of this as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thanks for that.

Mr. Battiste, did you have your hand up?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Yes.

While I think it's a good thing for the committee and I think your heart's in the right place, I think the family would much rather hear from you directly, Arnold.

If that is something that committee members individually... Just speaking from Mi'kmaq culture, to receive something from a committee or a government as a whole won't be as heartfelt than if you take the time to reach out to them yourself. If you require a phone number, I can get it from Regional Chief Ghislain Picard.

I think that would be much more appreciated by the family than a general something from a committee that gets voted on. I don't know if that's reconciliation.

If we're going to send our regrets and have a conversation, that should be a conversation you have with the family. If you need that help, I would be able to help you get that phone number from the regional chief of Quebec.

The Chair: I suppose what could be done in terms of the general approach in the way we work as a committee, without regard to motions, is that if we all wish to send condolences together as a group, based on what Mr. Battiste just told us, that might be the way to respond, rather than the regulatory process, which has kind of a cold edge to it.

To Mr. Anandasangaree's point of why we didn't do the previous one or whether we would do the next one—weeks don't pass without awful things happening.

We'll leave that where it is and perhaps have further discussion on it later.

As it stands now, my suggestion would be that we will establish the subcommittee for agenda review and bring forward the motions we've received notice on at this point. Does that sound fair?

Let me ask Mr. Anandasangaree whether the government would be amenable to that.

• (1230)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Yes, that's fair, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion? With the way we have it now, we have most of the documents.

Madame Bérubé, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: I just wanted to say that it does not preclude parties from presenting their motions later, as long as mine is debated today.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Do you wish to debate your motion today?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Yes, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm at the mercy of the committee.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I asked for clarity in the beginning. The understanding I have is that the subcommittee does this work and provides a recommendation to the committee of the whole. That's the normal practice, from my understanding. I feel like this steps outside of the normal practice, but of course this is at the discretion of the committee.

The Chair: Exactly.

We'll follow the process as outlined. We would require unanimous consent to go there, but I'm not seeing it. We'll leave the notices as they are and they'll come before the agenda review.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Chair, can I comment quickly?

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Maybe the answer was said right there, but I want to ask something as well. I have one motion that does not require a study. I'll read it again:

That the committee recognizes the immediate need for investment in broadband in Northern Canada to ensure remote communities are not left behind during this pandemic, and this be reported to the House.

I think this is something we can all get behind, and I'm just wondering if we have unanimous consent to discuss it right now.

The Chair: It's reflective of our previous conversation. I'm sure that it will be included in one of the motions that we have before us with regard to COVID. I think we need to at least, for the benefit of our first nations, Métis and Inuit people, ensure that we get right down to the business of the obstructions to quality of life that currently exist because of COVID. That is certainly one of them. I suggest that, rather than having our committee move endorsements of positions, we just stick to the business at hand, which is the approval of studies and then the enlistment of witnesses.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Chair, is it possible for me to ask for unanimous consent on that or is that your decision?

The Chair: We've heard the suggestion from Mr. Melillo. Rather than asking for unanimous consent, and as the Speaker would say, is there anyone who does not wish to approve unanimous consent?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Can I hear the wording again? Are we just talking about northern indigenous people? I'm from a first nations community where a lot of people don't have broadband and Internet. Is that something that can be expanded to all indigenous people across Canada who are suffering and aren't able to have broadband and Internet?

Mr. Eric Melillo: I would certainly be open to that. I'll just read it again as it is.

It says, "That the committee recognizes the immediate need for investment in broadband in Northern Canada to ensure remote communities are not left behind during this pandemic, and this be reported to the House."

The Chair: We'll have Mr. Anandasangaree, Mr. Powlowski and Mr. Battiste.

• (1235)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Chair, this is very much in line with my previous intervention. I would like some clarity with respect to committees passing motions like this. I have not been party to these in the previous Parliament. We've had two motions from the floor that essentially are asking for this committee to take a position on issues.

I don't have enough parliamentary knowledge on that to say if this is appropriate or not. I would like to get some clarity from the clerk on this.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: I agree with both motions. However, I also agree with Mr. Anandasangaree about whether we are going to be having similar kinds of motions asking us to make some broad statement with every meeting. Although we maybe agree upon it, this seems to be a whole new route.

I'm not sure we want to do this. I'm not sure if this isn't taking away from the functions of the committee if, at every committee potentially, we can be presented with a whole bunch of similar motions. We may agree upon them, but I'm not sure there's much to be gained in doing this.

This could take up our whole committee. We could all propose something that we would probably all agree on: Let's put a statement up about this, let's put a statement up about that or let's put a statement up about something else.

Even though we agree on it, I'm not sure what we gain from that. I think it's taking away from the functioning of the committee.

The Chair: I have Ms. Blaney, Ms. Zann and Mr. Battiste. Then I think we should wrap it up.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you for this.

I have heard several times today from several members, "our indigenous communities" and "our indigenous people". That's colonial language. I encourage everybody to think about that. The people I belong to don't belong to Canada. They are their own independent people.

In relation to this notice of motion, I'm a little confused about it. I represent many indigenous or rural and remote communities that do not have access to broadband, which has brought forward so many concerns, especially with COVID.

I am absolutely willing to support this, but also willing to see what the committee decides moving forward. It sounds like it needs unanimous consent, so that might be a barrier.

The Chair: Ms. Zann.

Ms. Lenore Zann: Actually, I didn't have my hand up.

The Chair: I'm sorry. The blue hand was still up from the last time.

Mr. Battiste, could you make your comments, please?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: I have changed my line of thinking since hearing MP Powlowski. While I did want to make an amendment to say maybe we should look at rural areas, then we'd start getting into which first nations and which areas, or whether we are just looking at northern areas.

As a Mi'kmaq person, did I drop the ball by supporting something that didn't also include first nations in Canada in rural areas? Then I think to myself, if I listen to MP Powlowski, this committee needs to start getting to the studies and figuring out which things we don't all agree on and how we can move the bar forward a little bit for first nations, Inuit and Métis across Canada.

I can understand the importance of all of us putting motions forward on things we agree with, but I would much rather we, as a group, create studies and recommendations for government to follow.

I think that now we need to get to those studies. Having these motions that we put forward and that everyone supports, I don't know what that does for my community. I don't know what that does for the first nations places that don't have good coverage.

Let's get to the studies. Let's get to discussing within the subcommittee what we're going to move forward on and let's get to the witnesses. I know we could spend a lot of this day looking at how and what we are all in agreement with, but I don't know what that does in practical terms for my first nations community.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. van Koeverden.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate all of the back and forth with respect to the motion. I do agree that it should be a broad one that includes all first nations, Métis and Inuit people across Canada.

MP Blaney, your point is very well taken. Language is important, and colonial language certainly has no place in Canada let alone on the INAN committee.

Mr. Viersen, I appreciate the sentiment. I would move that we agree to extend condolences, after a simple review of the language to make sure it's amenable for all parties and people. I think it would be a kind gesture and appropriate for this committee to extend.

The motion with respect to broadband is a good one as well. We just have to make sure it's inclusive.

• (1240)

The Chair: I'm going to ask the clerk. We will have an offline conversation about the mandate of the committee.

No one disagrees with the feelings that were expressed in Mr. Viersen's comments.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I have a point of order. As far as I know, we already have unanimous consent to be discussing Mr. Melillo's motion. Mr. Melillo's motion is the one that's on the floor right now. I very much support Mr. Melillo's motion, and I would like to dispose of that motion by having a vote.

The Chair: I'm not in favour of actually doing any motions as the chair right now, because our meeting has been going along very well in terms of—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: That won't work.

The Chair: I have the chair, Mr. Viersen. I have the floor right now. Please, let's not get into crosstalk.

You made a comment and I'm replying to the comment. My comment, as the chair, is to get down to the business of the mandated procedures that are in front of us, with regard to the very substantive motions that have been given notice today.

Regarding the other matters, we'll take an offline discussion as to how we want to proceed, or if we want to proceed, with regard to other comments or the feelings of the committee and so on, because really it is endless. There is no end to that, and that's fine. Everything that comes up we all consider, when we open up the paper or watch TV in the morning. Things fall on us. However, are we delaying what we are mandated to do by going off on tangents?

I'm going to ask that we hold this conversation off. We'll take a look at the mandate and come up with an approach at our next meeting. I really didn't want to—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Chair, on point of order, this is about the management of the meeting. I understood that you asked for unanimous consent from this committee to hear Mr. Melillo's motion. You said, "Is there unanimous consent? I'm going to wait for a 'no'." Nobody said "no".

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: No, it was not unanimous consent.

The Chair: It's not unanimous consent.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Then a discussion ensued. You gave the floor to Mr. Anandasangaree. He discussed Mr. Melillo's motion. We are de facto discussing Mr. Melillo's motion. We had unanimous consent.

The Chair: We've really gotten off track.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: We had unanimous consent. We started discussing Mr. Melillo's motion. We went through several speakers on Mr. Melillo's motion. I would expect that, at some point, we would be disposing of that motion. That is how motions are dealt with in this committee. I would ask that we dispose of this motion by having a vote. If I am wrong, I look to the clerk to clarify that a little bit.

The Chair: Thank you. Do we have unanimous consent?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: You did that.

The Chair: I'm seeing a no. There's no unanimous consent, so for the purposes of—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Chair, I distinctly remember you asking, "Is there unanimous consent?" You can review the tape of this. Nobody said no. Then we started discussing. We can't go back now and say, "Is there still unanimous consent?" That's not how this works.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: There was unanimous consent given to discuss it, and then we discussed it.

The Chair: Yes. We didn't deal with the motion.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: The motion is still on the floor.

The Chair: Okay. The motion is on the floor. Do we have unanimous consent?

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: I have a point of order.

The Chair: What is your point of order, Mr. Powlowski?

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Why did you say there was unanimous consent? I didn't hear that there was unanimous consent.

• (1245)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: It was clearly asked.

The Chair: I'm going to have to stop this discussion now because we have gone way off track. We don't have unanimous consent—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: What are we doing with Mr. Melillo's motion now? We have been discussing it. We need to do something with it.

The Chair: We're not going to do anything with it, because we don't have unanimous consent.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Ms. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you, Chair.

When you do committee business... Can you clarify? We agreed to look at the studies and move the studies that were suggested as notices of motions to committee. Now we're actually looking at a committee motion, and I understand—number one—that, being as we're in committee business, we don't necessarily need unanimous consent. Second, I also express some confusion because I understood we had not proceeded with Arnold's, but you had asked the question in terms of unanimous consent. I'm not sure we need it. We had proceeded with the other motion, which is not about a study. It's just about an expression of the committee's thoughts on something.

The Chair: Okay. To be very honest, there's nothing that we disagree about. What we're discussing right now is how the business of the indigenous and northern affairs committee is going to move forward and whether other elements, such as reflections on incidents that are arising, call for comment from the committee.

Perhaps I could get an overview from the clerk on the direction we're headed. I am at the hands of the committee and at the mandate of the committee.

Mr. Clerk, do you have any suggestions for us?

The Clerk: My understanding of the general direction of the discussion is that motions regarding future business were going to be referred to the subcommittee for consideration and prioritization. The committee was discussing whether it should be all of these motions or whether they wanted to consider some today.

As of yet, there are some that have been given oral notice and others that we have received electronically. We're in the middle of that future business discussion right now.

The Chair: My preference would be that we move to the subcommittee with everything that's before us.

Once again, I haven't stated that I don't wish to do this sort of business. It just seems to me, as has been stated by others, that it's not something we've done before. It's not a horrid precedent. I just want to make sure that we're moving within the accepted procedures of the committee and of PROC, and that we simply move on to the agenda review subcommittee and deal with all—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Chair, one of the things about a committee being in control of its own destiny, so to speak, is that we have the ability to move motions and that we are of the ability to pass those motions.

The Chair: That's right.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: If you're going to just run roughshod over that ability of my colleague, Mr. Melillo to...

You asked for unanimous consent. We moved the motion appropriately. We are in committee business. As far as I know—I don't have the book in front of me; it's back in Ottawa—when we're in committee business, we can move motions on the floor. We don't need 48 hours' notice. We don't need unanimous consent. We can just move them.

In my case, I did not have 48 hours' notice and you put that up as a roadblock. That's fine. I walked away from it.

Before the committee was even constituted—this is the constitution meeting—he put his motion on notice. Now he is moving it on the floor. You asked for unanimous consent; we got unanimous consent. We then moved into discussion. That then demands the motion be disposed of.

Now if you want someone to move to table this motion so that we can discuss it at a later date, I'm happy to do that.

I think that it should be disposed of right now, and I will be voting in that direction. I will be voting to support Mr. Melillo's motion.

The Chair: Okay.

Now—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: That is a matter of this committee being in control of its own destiny. When there is a motion on the floor, we can either table it for discussion at a later date or we can dispose of it with an up-down vote.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I am in favour of disposing it with an up-down vote at this point. I would ask for that vote to happen forthwith.

• (1250)

The Chair: Okay, I'm pleased to do that.

I would say, Mr. Viersen, when you speak about people running roughshod, I have never run roughshod over a committee in my life, in all of the committees that I've chaired, as mayor and so on. This is a discussion about how the business of the committee is moving forward.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: As far as I'm—

The Chair: I would appreciate leaving the emotional language out of it and just discussing what's before us.

In a moment I'm going to put the question from Mr. Melillo to the committee.

Mr. Powlowski, you have the floor.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: If there is agreement that there has to be unanimous consent to entertain a motion, I did not give consent to entertain this motion.

If we're going to have that kind of vote, I think it has to be clear that everybody is nodding or agreeing. Certainly I didn't hear that. I did not give consent to hear this motion.

The Chair: Ms. Blaney, did you have your hand up?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: I did, Chair.

Thank you for this robust discussion.

I'm not trying to be contrarian in anyway, but I agree with Mr. Viersen on this. I thought we were moving towards giving consent. When you asked whether anyone disagreed, nobody said anything, and then it moved to conversation. I was confused.

The Chair: Was that on Mr. Viersen's motion or Mr. Melillo's motion?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: It was Mr. Melillo's motion.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: I just want to share what I saw. Hopefully we can get to a place on this.

The Chair: Let's get to it right now.

Mr. Powlowski, I'm sorry if I missed that, but I believe we have unanimous consent to allow a vote to take place on Mr. Melillo's motion.

Mr. Melillo, would you repeat the motion once again? Then we'll go to the committee.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Absolutely. It is:

That the committee recognizes the immediate need for investment in broadband in Northern Canada to ensure remote communities are not left behind during this pandemic, and this be reported to the House.

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden, do you wish to speak to the motion?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I would.

When we're sitting in the same room, we can often edit these together and come to an agreement on the wording. This being extraordinary in terms of the circumstances, where we are sitting in, presumably, different provinces and territories right now, I think an opportunity to expand on Mr. Melillo's motion is prudent.

Quite frankly, I don't want to vote it down. I think it's worth exploring. To Mr. Battiste's point, his community is indigenous and not northern but does also experience issues with broadband, as do communities very close to my riding in the Six Nations. It's a good motion that requires an edit from all our members so that it suits everybody's issues.

The Chair: To that point, perhaps we can go off-line with the motion, have it tabled, and then at our next meeting have an amendment discussion. It sounds to me as though there is some positive consideration, but maybe the edit is required. Certainly the around-the-table format works much better for that than what we have here, which is the *Hollywood Squares* format.

Mr. Melillo, would you consider tabling the motion?

Mr. Eric Melillo: Yes, Mr. Chair. I'm certainly not opposed to that.

I wonder whether my colleagues on the committee would be interested in adding that wording now, if possible. We could add "rural communities" and "indigenous communities", and really broaden the scope of it. I'm not opposed to that. As well, perhaps we want to make the change now and get it done. I think there's a lot of agreement on what those amendments should be.

The Chair: It won't be that much longer for this matter to move forward, if that's the committee's wish, if we take the time to take it up as the first item of the new meeting, the next meeting. I know you forwarded the material, but my feeling is that we could find solid agreement to move forward with a bit of discussion off-line, because we've spent some time on this.

I just wonder if we could table it for the next meeting and bring it up as the first item. As the chair, I'd like that, but it's up to you. If you agree with that, we'll do it. If you wish to consider hearing amendments, we can do that, too.

• (1255)

Mr. Eric Melillo: I wonder what the thoughts are of my colleagues. I think we could add to "broadband in northern Canada", "indigenous communities" and "rural and remote communities", and add that amendment now. I'm not sure if anyone is looking for anything different in terms of broadening the scope. If we want to have that discussion, obviously we can table it for the next meeting, but from the sounds of it, we're all on the same page about how to amend it.

The Chair: I think we're close, but once again, you never want to move something that is faulty, because then you're stuck with what you've said.

Mr. Powlowski, go ahead.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: There is something else you could add. I think a lot of people recognize that there are also economic barriers to Internet access. For example, urban indigenous people often don't have access because they don't have money for Internet or for a computer. That isn't in there. That's a problem with these broad statements. There are always things that could be changed.

in my opinion, it's better left to next week.

The Chair: Mr. Melillo, if you don't mind, I'm going to suggest that.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Yes, Mr. Chair, I'm in agreement with that. We could table that at the next meeting.

I would just add that, in general, these types of motions, although not launching studies and not necessarily as substantive as some of the others, are important to show where there's some agreement in the committee and to bring that forward to the government and to all Canadians. I just want to make that point on the record, but absolutely I agree with the decision.

(Motion allowed to stand)

The Chair: I want to assure you that in the spirit of the mandate of indigenous and northern affairs, we're all working toward positive outcomes for the people we're representing.

We'll leave it at that, and I'll ask if there's any other business that we need to consider at this moment.

If not, Mr. Clerk, do you have anything more that I've skipped over?

The Clerk: Just to recap, all motions that have been recorded for this meeting, with the exception of the motion from Mr. Melillo, are going to be referred to the subcommittee for consideration and prioritization. Also, the first item of business for the next meeting is the motion moved in the name of Mr. Melillo.

The Chair: Is everyone satisfied with that?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I need just a quick clarification. Our next regular meeting is for the motion, not the subcommittee meeting.

The Chair: No, it's the regular meeting. We'll go right to it at the regular meeting.

The Clerk: That's correct.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, all, and Mr. Clerk, thank you for joining us. It's a brave new world. We have serious issues to confront on this committee, and I appreciate everyone's concern and candour.

[Translation]

See you next time!

[*English*]

The meeting is adjourned.

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