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Chair: Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg



Standing Committee on Official Languages

Tuesday, October 13, 2020

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Josée Ménard): We can begin.

We will proceed with the election of the chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Madam Clerk, I am very pleased and honoured to nominate Emmanuel Dubourg for chair of our committee.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: I will first read the text I have in front of me. Then I will receive your motion, Mr. Duguid.

I see a quorum.

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

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party.

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

It has been moved by Mr. Duguid that Mr. Dubourg be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): I second the motion.

Mr. Dubourg, you owe us a beer.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Ha, ha! I'm waiting for the final verdict.

[*English*]

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Duguid that Mr. Dubourg be elected as chair of the committee.

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

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: I declare Mr. Dubourg duly elected chair of the committee.

I invite him to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.)): Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. I'm very pleased.

Thank you to everyone for voting to elect me chair of the committee. Most of you were here before. I'm really glad to see you all back ready to continue to work to move the issues forward.

Madam Clerk, I would also like to take this opportunity to greet you and Nancy Vohl, who is accompanying you. There are also the interpreters, and I'm not forgetting the analysts, in this case Ms. Lecomte and Ms. Blackmore.

Madam Clerk, I will now let you proceed with the election of the two vice-chairs.

[*English*]

The Clerk: Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

I am now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I nominate Mr. Steven Blaney as vice-chair.

[*English*]

The Clerk: Are there any further motions?

It has been moved by Mr. Généreux that Mr. Blaney be elected as first vice-chair of the committee. 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)

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

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Congratulations, Mr. Blaney.

• (1550)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As an Irish descendant, I consider it an honour to be a member of this most francophone of Canadian parliamentary committees.

The Clerk: Pursuant to S.O. 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

I am now prepared to receive motions for the second vice-chair.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): I nominate Mr. Beaulieu.

The Clerk: Are there any further motions?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I nominate Ms. Ashton.

I think she's more likely to buy me a beer than Mr. Beaulieu.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): That's nice. We're not known for our beer here, but maybe that's the case in Quebec.

The Clerk: More than one candidate has been proposed. In accordance with the order adopted by the House on Wednesday, September 23, 2020, any motion received after the first is to be treated as a notice of motion. These motions must be submitted to the committee one after the other until one is adopted.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: It's about maintaining equity between men and women vice-chairs, Mr. Beaulieu. It's nothing against you personally.

The Clerk: I will therefore put to a vote the first motion, that of Ms. Lambropoulos, who nominated Mr. Beaulieu for the position of second vice-chair.

It will be a recorded division.

Mr. René Arseneault: So we have to choose someone? Is that what you are asking us to do?

Ms. Ashton, I don't want you to be angry with me, but Mr. Beaulieu already has a year's experience.

Although they are two good candidates, I will vote for the person who held this position last year, Mr. Beaulieu.

The Clerk: I'd like to briefly remind you that the motion before the committee at this time, which is being voted on, is the first. Pursuant to the order adopted by the House, the second proposed motion is treated as a notice of motion. The committee must first vote on the first motion, Ms. Lambropoulos' motion. I remind the committee that this motion proposes the nomination of Mr. Beaulieu for second vice-chair and that it is not a question of choosing between the two nominees. The second proposal is considered a notice of motion.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Clerk, I have a question. Will Mr. Beaulieu be automatically elected or will we have an opportunity to vote on Ms. Ashton's nomination?

The Clerk: At this time, we are dealing with Ms. Lambropoulos' motion to nominate Mr. Beaulieu for the position of second vice-chair.

In accordance with the same order adopted by the House on September 23, since the process is to be done virtually, there will be no secret ballot, unlike the general practice of electing the chair at face-to-face meetings.

If there are two different motions for the same position, the second is considered a notice of motion. The committee must first vote

on the first motion presented, namely the motion to nominate Mr. Beaulieu for the position of second vice-chair. If that motion is defeated, the second motion will then be put to a vote.

Hon. Steven Blaney: In that case, I will vote against the motion, for the sake of the principle of regional diversity in the membership. Of course, this is nothing against Mr. Beaulieu. It is simply a geographical consideration.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I would also like to point out that Ms. Ashton is under the banner of a national party that represents francophones across Canada.

Once again, it's nothing against you personally, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): I will be voting like my compatriots.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I will also vote against this motion, out of respect for Mr. Blaney who wants to propose my nomination and for Mr. Généreux who supports it, as well as out of recognition of the need for regional sensitivity within our committee.

(Motion agreed to: yeas, 6; nays, 5)

The Chair: Madam Clerk, I understand that this motion for the appointment of Mr. Beaulieu was carried, correct?

• (1555)

Ms. Nancy Vohl (Clerk of the Committee): That's right. Six members voted in favour and five against. The motion that Mr. Beaulieu be elected second vice-chair is therefore carried.

The Chair: Very well. And so...

Ms. Niki Ashton: Sorry, may I make a comment?

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Ashton.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I first want to congratulate you, Mr. Chair.

That said, I have a correction. Mr. Généreux was actually the person who put my name forward. In this virtual world, we sometimes make mistakes. I want to express my sincere gratitude to him.

Congratulations, Mr. Beaulieu.

• (1600)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Thank you.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Madam Clerk, does this mean that the chair and the vice-chairs of the committee have been duly elected?

Ms. Nancy Vohl: Yes. The chair and the two vice-chairs have been duly elected. The committee is fully constituted.

The committee is now in your hands, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

I also want to congratulate the vice-chairs. We'll work together and make sure that we hear from everyone in all the regions. As Mr. Blaney said, since this is a national committee, we must think of everyone. We must really meet the committee's objectives and fulfill its mandate.

On that note, as is customary, I think that we should now address the routine motions.

Ms. Ashton, the floor is yours.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to move a motion regarding our schedule—

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Chair, with all due respect, as you can see on the console, I've had my hand up since the beginning.

Sorry for interrupting you, Ms. Ashton. I hate to have to do that.

The Chair: I'll ask the clerk, Ms. Vohl, to speak, because we must stick to the order for motions.

Madam Clerk, the floor is yours.

Ms. Nancy Vohl: Mr. Chair, since this is the committee's first virtual meeting, I should point out that there are two ways to seek the floor. The first option is to click on the little blue hand in Zoom.

Can you see it, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, it's in the list of participants. But will I see it on the screen?

Ms. Nancy Vohl: If you have set up your screen to see all the participants, and not just the person speaking, you'll see a small blue hand in a square to the left of each participant.

Can you see it, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: I can't see it right now.

Can someone try it, just as a test?

Ms. Nancy Vohl: Three people have their hands up.

I'll guide you through this, Mr. Chair. At the bottom of your screen, you should see two little men and the number 24.

The Chair: I can see them. Those are the participants.

Ms. Nancy Vohl: If you click on it, the list of participants should appear on the right side of the screen. By the way, any committee member can do this. When people click on the blue raised hand, their name will appear on this list in the order in which they sought the floor.

By nature, people are used to simply raising their hands in committee meetings to seek the floor. This is the second option. Mr. Chair, I encourage you to watch carefully and to take note of who wants the floor.

I know that this is the first committee meeting that you're chairing with the help of your clerk, Ms. Ménard. I'll give her the floor afterwards. As soon as the meeting is over, a process can be established with you.

On that note, I'll turn things over to you. It's up to you, as chair, to give the floor to people.

The Chair: Absolutely. Thank you.

The procedure dictates that now that we've finished electing the chair and vice-chairs, we should proceed with the routine motions regarding the operation of the committee, and then discuss other motions.

Madam Clerk, could you please confirm that this is the case?

• (1605)

Ms. Nancy Vohl: I'll let your clerk, Ms. Ménard, respond.

The Clerk: You can start with the routine motions. You can introduce them one at a time, or all at once. It's up to you. Sometimes, people think that it's a little easier to introduce them one at a time. However, it's really up to you.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

I want the process to be fair for everyone. Personally, I'd like to start with the routine motions. However, I currently see four hands raised in the list of participants: Mrs. Lalonde, Ms. Lattanzio, Ms. Lambropoulos and Mr. Beaulieu. Ms. Ashton has also asked to speak.

I suggest that we start with the routine motions to establish the rules of operation for our committee. We can then give the floor to the four members who raised their hands and add Ms. Ashton as the fifth speaker. Does that work for you?

Ms. Ashton, the floor is yours.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Chair, I wanted to move a motion regarding the routine motions. That's why I raised my hand.

In other committees that I've served on, we could also click on the button. However, most of the time, we just raised our hands.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

I encourage you to do both. When I put the list of participants on my screen, I don't see all the committee members, so please do both. That way, the names of the participants who clicked on the button to raise their hands will appear in order.

Regarding your comments, Ms. Ashton, your motion will certainly be part of the routine motions, whether it's the motion pertaining to the right to speak or the motion concerning the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure. Please keep your motion handy and speak when the topic comes up. That way, we can continue the process.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Okay, but I just want to say that my motion concerns our schedule, evidence and the speaking time of each party. I don't understand why I would be fifth to speak, since I raised my hand before.

The Chair: When the time comes, you won't need to wait until the other four people have spoken. The routine motions will be moved one by one, and you can move an amendment to each one. It could be an amendment with regard to the schedule, for example. Anyone can rise to move an amendment, whether the amendment concerns the schedule or something else. We won't address the routine motions all at once. We'll consider them one by one and vote on each one separately.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Chair, at that point, shouldn't we disable the raise hand icon and turn it back on each time? This might make things clearer.

The Chair: Good idea.

Madam Clerk, in that case, could you disable the raised hands?

Ms. Nancy Vohl: It will depend on whether the members raised their hands to move a routine motion, or to table a motion to undertake a study or any other motion. Mr. Chair seems to be saying that he would prefer to start with the routine motions. If the members raised their hands for anything other than the routine motions, they could disable the function now and turn it back on later to avoid confusing Mr. Chair.

• (1610)

The Chair: Okay, that's done.

This leaves Mrs. Lalonde with her hand raised.

Let's start with the first routine motion.

Mrs. Lalonde, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Ashton, I'm very sorry for interrupting you. I don't usually do that. I wanted to move a routine motion. If you have any amendments to move, the committee can hear them.

Mr. Chair, I want to move the first routine motion, which concerns the analyst services.

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

The Chair: Madam Clerk, if the committee members agree, rather than voting on the routine motions individually, we could simply ask whether any members are opposed to certain motions. If they want to make amendments, we can hear them.

The Clerk: You can proceed this way if you think that it's more efficient.

The Chair: Gladly.

Let's get started.

The Clerk: Do you want to proceed by recorded division or by consensus?

The Chair: I think that we can first try to determine whether there's consensus. If we see at some point that we should switch to a recorded division, we'll proceed that way.

We'll first ask the members whether there's consensus.

The Clerk: Is there consensus regarding the motion moved by Mrs. Lalonde?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: We can proceed to the next motion.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you, Madam Clerk.

I'll now move the motion regarding the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure:

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.

The Chair: Again, is there consensus?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, if you don't mind, I just want to make sure that everyone's microphone is turned off.

Mr. Beaulieu, we can hear you speaking.

I just want to make sure that we aren't inadvertently saying things to other people.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have a question about the subcommittee.

Our committee has 12 members. Will we be creating another subcommittee?

The Chair: Usually, as stated in the motion, the subcommittee consists of the chair, the vice-chairs and one other member. I don't know whether this answers your question, Mr. Dalton.

Can we reread the motion?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I can reread it to you, Mr. Dalton.

The Chair: One moment, please. Mr. Arseneault wants to speak.

Mr. René Arseneault: Mr. Dalton, since you're new to the committee, I want to let you know that, in recent years, the subcommittee has consisted of the chair, the first vice-chair, the second vice-chair and someone from another party. Last year, the subcommittee consisted of the Parliamentary Secretary, meaning me; the chair; the first vice-chair; the second vice-chair; and a member of the third opposition party. This year is special because we have a third opposition party. We can easily accept that the NDP will also be there as the third opposition party.

In short, the purpose of the subcommittee is to improve efficiency when it comes to prioritizing motions, for example. That's what we were doing at our meetings. It's a way to save time. It gives the parties the opportunity to address issues outside the committee discussions.

• (1615)

Mr. Marc Dalton: Thank you. The subcommittee should consist of three opposition members and two government members. Is that right?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Dalton, I'll reread the motion regarding the subcommittee.

[*English*]

Should I read it in English? No? Okay.

[*Translation*]

The motion is as follows:

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.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, I invite you to put the motion to a vote.

The Chair: Yes, gladly. Let's get started, Madam Clerk.

Perhaps we could proceed the same way?

The Clerk: We can proceed by consensus or by recorded division.

The Chair: We'll proceed by consensus.

The Clerk: Is there consensus regarding the motion moved by Mrs. Lalonde?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: You can continue, Mrs. Lalonde.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'll now move the motion concerning meetings without a quorum:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four members are present, including a 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.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now vote on the meetings without a quorum.

The Clerk: Is there consensus regarding this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I now move the motion regarding the time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses:

That witnesses be given 10 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:

Round 1:

Conservative Party

Liberal Party

Bloc Québécois

New Democratic Party

For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows:

Conservative Party, five 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.

The Chair: We can now discuss the motion.

The list starts with Ms. Lambropoulos, and then Mr. Beaulieu. I also saw that Ms. Ashton and Mr. Généreux raised their hands.

Ms. Lambropoulos, you have the floor.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I'm in favour of the motion, but I want a part added to it.

[*English*]

It would say that all of the slots should be respected, and that we should ensure that every member who is supposed to be speaking gets the chance to speak, unless they can't because the room is being taken over by another committee after ours, but that we respect the time allotted to every member, and that, regardless of whether we have technical problems at the beginning of meetings, everybody's time is respected.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I move the following amendment:

That witnesses be given five minutes for their opening statement; that, where possible, witnesses provide their opening statement to the committee 72 hours ahead of time; that, at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses in the first round, there be allocated six minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows:

Conservative Party

Liberal Party

Bloc Québécois

New Democratic Party

For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows:

Conservative Party, five minutes

Liberal Party, five minutes

Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes

New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes

Conservative Party, five minutes

Liberal Party, five minutes

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Now we'll hear comments from the other members.

Just a reminder that we have to go in order, so we need to deal with and vote on the amendment first. Last, we go to the motion.

Ms. Ashton wanted to comment. Please go ahead, Ms. Ashton.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm actually against Mrs. Lalonde's motion and for Mr. Beaulieu's amendment. I think it's a much more effective way to proceed. Giving the witnesses five minutes for their opening statements leaves all the parties more time for questions. I think it's important for all the opposition parties to have their say. It's also worth noting that many committees have voted in favour of this more effective approach.

I was going to move the exact same amendment as Mr. Beaulieu, which is why I plan to support it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Généreux, the floor is yours.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask Mrs. Lalonde whether the approach she's proposing is the same one the committee followed before. I think things worked very well before, but I don't recall the NDP and Bloc Québécois having only two and a half minutes.

My preference is to stick to the way we did it before.

The Chair: I can answer your question, Mr. Généreux.

The routine motions we're reading are the same ones that were submitted and agreed to in the previous session. They were adopted on February 20, 2020.

We have one last comment before we proceed with the vote.

Mr. Arseneault, the floor is yours.

Mr. René Arseneault: Actually, Mr. Généreux said exactly what I was going to say. I'm in favour of the status quo. As a long-standing committee member, I can tell you that the way we've done things has always worked well. Ten minutes may seem like a lot of time, but language issues are often complicated, involving the Constitution or the Official Languages Act. Ten minutes isn't that much time. In fact, we usually have to cut witnesses off at the 10-minute mark.

I agree with Mr. Généreux. I like how we've done things since 2015, so I support the status quo.

• (1625)

The Chair: Very good. Thank you.

Ms. Lattanzio, you may go ahead.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I understand it, the idea is to give witnesses less time for their opening statements to push the other two parties to the middle of the second round.

As the member mentioned initially, we always need to ensure that every party gets an opportunity to speak. I agree with the members who spoke right before me, including Mr. Généreux. Having been on the committee during the last session of Parliament, I, too, can attest to the fact that everything worked as it should.

For those reasons, I'm going to have to vote against the amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lattanzio.

Mr. Beaulieu, go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I just wanted to point out that keeping the first slot to five minutes doesn't prevent the other members from speaking again. What it does do, though, is ensure all members have a greater opportunity to speak. In the last session, we often lost our speaking time when time was running out.

That's the idea behind the amendment.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Duguid, the floor is yours.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Chair, one reason I put your name forward in nomination was that you are a very fair-minded individual. You are a very able chair. I think you can use your discretion, as Ms. Lambropoulos mentioned. I think she has made a persuasive argument. I would like to join her in support of that approach to use the chair's discretion. Everyone will get a chance to speak.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We've heard from the various members.

We have a motion that...

Just a moment, I see that Ms. Vohl would like to say something.

Ms. Nancy Vohl: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My apologies for jumping in. I wouldn't do this at an in-person meeting, but since we haven't yet had a chance to discuss how to communicate during a virtual sitting, I wanted to bring something to your attention.

Regarding the part of the motion that calls for witnesses to provide their briefs 72 hours ahead of time, I just have a reminder for committee members. As the clerk, I can tell you it's certainly a measure the committee can adopt, but it isn't necessarily feasible or sure to happen every time. It depends on the situation, the committee and the witness. A witness could be invited to appear or a new witness could be added to the list less than 72 hours before the meeting. Also, certain witnesses may not have the ability to put together their notes 72 hours ahead of time.

The Chair: All right. Thank you for that comment.

In light of that, Mr. Beaulieu, would you like to put forward another motion or can we proceed with adopting the original motion?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I actually moved an amendment.

The Chair: Yes, that's right. It was an amendment.

As we've just heard, the 72-hour time frame is problematic. It's something to think about.

Mrs. Lalonde, you may go ahead.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Chair, I would just like to have the clerk, Ms. Vohl, clarify something.

My understanding is that, in these exceptional circumstances, the part of Mr. Beaulieu's amendment that calls for witnesses to provide their statements 72 hours ahead of time would be very difficult to adhere to and could be a hindrance for witnesses.

Do I understand the clerk's comment correctly?

• (1630)

Ms. Nancy Vohl: Mr. Chair, with your permission, I can provide some clarity on that.

It's no problem to adopt the amendment, but it may be advisable to add something to the effect of "where practicable" to the sentence or, at the very least, to bear in mind that it will apply when it's possible. In cases where witnesses are asked to appear less than 72 hours ahead of time, they obviously can't provide their briefs before they were even invited.

I'm not saying the committee can't include the part in question; I just wanted to bring the consideration to members' attention.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Ashton, please go ahead.

Ms. Niki Ashton: On the matter of the 72 hours, it's very important that we be flexible. We recognize that many organizations are going through a difficult time right now, so it's not realistic to expect that they always be able to provide their statements three days ahead of time. We want to be able to hear from them, after all.

My thinking was the same as Mr. Beaulieu's regarding the five minutes. I think a lot can be said in five minutes. As members, we're used to saying things in five minutes, or even 35 seconds, as we do during oral question period. We may not be as clear as we should, but that's for us to determine.

Allocating five minutes gives people time while giving us a chance to do our jobs properly.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Beaulieu, it's over to you.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I just wanted to point out that my amendment clearly states "that, where possible, witnesses provide their opening statement to the committee 72 hours ahead of time". Naturally, if we made it a requirement, there are people we wouldn't be able to hear from.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Généreux, the floor is yours.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: I would like to say quickly that there are interesting elements in both proposals.

I think everyone wants to work collaboratively. It's been one of the characteristics of this committee from the beginning.

I would propose an amendment to Mr. Beaulieu's proposal. I'd like to make sure I fully understand.

You told me that the way we used to operate, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP only had two and a half minutes. I'm surprised, because I thought we all always had at least five minutes of speaking time.

In any case, I agree with everyone that there needs to be more flexibility regarding the 72-hour period.

I could have been open to the Bloc Québécois and the NDP having five minutes to speak and ask questions.

This is the five minutes we're talking about, isn't it?

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I'm listening.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: That's right. At the outset, the amendment proposes that witnesses be given five minutes. It also states that, to the extent possible—

Mr. Bernard Généreux: This is in order to add time at the end. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Yes, that's right. It gives everyone more time to speak or to speak again.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Certainly, I think it's important to keep the 10 minutes at the start for the witnesses.

The Chair: Mr. Généreux, as I understand it, the routine motion presented is the same as the one we adopted last February. It proposes six minutes per party for the first round of questions, in the following order: Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois and NDP. For the second round, it proposes the following: five minutes for the Conservative Party, five minutes for the Liberal Party, five minutes for the Conservative Party, five minutes for the Liberal Party, two and a half minutes for the Bloc Québécois and two and a half minutes for the New Democratic Party.

What I understand from Mr. Beaulieu's proposal is that he wants to reduce the time allotted to witness presentations from 10 minutes to five, and to make up those five minutes in the second round, so that the NDP and the Bloc Québécois will each have five minutes as well.

Let's clarify all of this so that we can deal with the amendment and vote on the motion.

I will first give the floor to Mrs. Lalonde and then to Mr. Beaulieu, based on the raised hands I see on the screen.

Go ahead, Mrs. Lalonde.

● (1635)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In response, Mr. Généreux, I must say that this routine motion is the one that was adopted in February of this year, and I also believe it corresponds to a long-standing practice of the Standing Committee on Official Languages and other committees.

My colleague Mr. Beaulieu is only proposing that we change the speaking order and cut five minutes from witness presentations. In your intervention, Mr. Généreux, you said that you would like to keep the 10 minutes allocated to witnesses. Personally, I would lean toward the proposal of my colleague Ms. Lambropoulos, which is to ensure a spirit of cooperation, as has always existed within the committee, by the way, and which is very pleasant. As Mr. Duguid was saying, our wonderful chair can ensure that spirit of collaboration and ensure that all members and their respective parties are entitled to their speaking time.

I must reiterate the importance of keeping the routine motion that was passed in the first session of the 43rd Parliament. Thanks to you, Mr. Chair, we will ensure that the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party keep their two-and-a-half minute speaking time in subsequent rounds, while respecting the speaking time and order proposed in the original motion.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

There are four people who want to speak: Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Dalton, Ms. Ashton and Mr. Duguid.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I think it's important to keep the same order. I'm willing to agree to Mr. Généreux's compromise proposal. We would leave 10 minutes to the witnesses, we would keep the same speaking order, and we would give five minutes to the Bloc Québécois and five minutes to the NDP, to balance out the speaking time a little bit.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Dalton, the floor is yours.

Mr. Marc Dalton: I just want to say that, in my opinion, it is absolutely necessary to keep the 10 minutes allotted to witnesses. They're coming to testify, we want to hear from them, and they have a lot to say. We shouldn't reduce that time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Ashton.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm open to the possibility of keeping the 10 minutes for the witnesses. I think the members have made some good points.

I really liked Mr. Beaulieu's proposal that in the second round, the Conservatives and Liberals speak for five minutes each, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP speak for two and a half minutes each, and then the Conservatives and Liberals speak for five minutes each.

I'm not sure if that's what you just changed, Mr. Beaulieu, but I know that if we keep the 10 minutes allotted to the witnesses, we'll still be pressed for time. That's why I'm open to the possibility of keeping the speaking time of two and a half minutes, but changing the speaking order, so that the Bloc Québécois speaks third and the NDP, fourth, and then the Conservatives and Liberals would have five minutes.

I would like to mention my great appreciation to the committee for its desire to be fair in intervention, but as we all know, we face many technology challenges in virtual sessions. Time is of the essence, and we can't always be flexible, which is why I believe that now that we have the opportunity, we need to develop a formal approach to ensure that all parties have the opportunity to ask questions in the second round. We need to make sure we have a strong democracy on our committee. Again, let's recognize that five minutes may not work for everyone, but the most important thing is to make sure we hear from everyone. Let's keep the two and a half minutes for the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, but let's put them higher on the list, so that they are the third and fourth to speak.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll hear from two more speakers: first, Mr. Duguid, and then Mr. Arseneault.

Go ahead, Mr. Duguid.

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A number of people have made my point already, that 10 minutes is absolutely essential to hear delegations. These folks are coming from a long way. From our home province of Manitoba, Ms. Ashton, it's 2,000 miles. Really, to give them only five minutes would not be acceptable. In fact, it would be insulting. I'm glad everyone has made that point, and we seem to have achieved consensus on that item.

[Translation]

The Chair: In closing, I'll give the floor to Mr. Arseneault.

Actually, it isn't in closing; let's say that it's an additional intervention.

Mr. René Arseneault: Which means I'm last but not least.

Ms. Ashton, we're all saying pretty much the same thing, in the end. You may be afraid that because of a lack of time, the last ones on the list will lose their speaking time in the second round, but I can assure you that for as long as I've been here, since 2015, let alone Mr. Dubourg, who remains our chair [*Technical difficulty*]...

Mr. Chair, my sound is unacceptable.

The Chair: Your mic is on mute.

Mr. René Arseneault: My apologies.

As I told Ms. Ashton, we're all saying pretty much the same thing. If your concern is that in the second round, because of a lack of time, certain parties would be eliminated from the list of the routine motion proposed by Mrs. Lalonde, I can assure you of this: I have been on this committee since 2015, with Bernard Généreux, among others, who is a Conservative, and I have never seen a chair cut time by eliminating the time of the last speakers on the list. On the contrary, at their discretion, chairs, even Conservative vice-chairs like Mr. Clarke, among others, would cut time proportionally, so that everyone could say what they had to say within the allotted time. This proportion has always been respected. I've never seen the opposite happen.

Ultimately, everyone is saying pretty much the same thing. It all rests on your little shoulders, Mr. Dubourg, that is to say, respect, in the second round—

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. René Arseneault: The time allotted to each party is respected, even though it may be shorter for everyone equally.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Arseneault.

Before going to Ms. Ashton, I'll give the floor to Mr. Beaulieu, who had raised his hand.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: At the very least, we could agree with Ms. Ashton's position.

In the original proposal, in the second round, the Conservative and Liberal parties are entitled to two five-minute rounds, and then the Bloc and NDP are entitled to two and a half minutes each. The difference with the amendment is that the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party each get five minutes, then the Bloc and the NDP get their two and a half minutes, and then the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party get their second block of five minutes each.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems to me that there have already been times when there wasn't enough time for me to speak again. It's allocated in a way that isn't necessarily more fair, but at least it gives us an extra chance to speak when we have witnesses.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Ashton, the floor is yours.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I fully agree with Mr. Beaulieu; it's a matter of fairness on this committee. I've served on many committees for several years, and even since we've been meeting virtually. We all have a desire to contribute and to be fair, but it is always important to have an agenda to follow to ensure fairness. That's why I support Mr. Beaulieu's comments on the second round.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dalton also wants to speak.

Mr. Marc Dalton: No, I'm sorry.

The Chair: Okay.

There are many interventions on the issue. It's true that I, too, have to do my job. Rest assured that it's important to me that the time allotted is fair, so that all parties can speak.

I see that you'd like to add something, Ms. Lambropoulos. We're listening.

[*English*]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: The fact that this is even something we're worried about—people not all getting their chance to ask questions—is problematic. I agree that five minutes is taking a lot of time away from our witnesses. However, the witnesses are there to answer our questions. We will be hearing from them. We will be getting their testimony as a whole.

Regardless of which order we're going in, I believe it's important that all of us get to ask our questions, as that is why we're here. Maybe not necessarily removing five minutes from each witness, but lessening their time would be good, if it's going to help us buy some time for everybody to get their chance to speak, and obviously giving discretion to the chair as well. I have full confidence that Mr. Dubourg is a fair chair and is going to do his best to let everybody in and let every party be represented.

Maybe we should be considering.... I fully understand where Mr. Duguid is coming from as well with regard to five-minute testimony, but these witnesses are going to be there for the entire duration of the meeting and they will be answering our questions and providing us with a document as well, hopefully. Maybe we should consider shortening the time so we all get a chance to speak.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Lattanzio.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To summarize what is being discussed, my understanding is that we should keep the way we do things and not adopt this amendment. If we make the proposed changes, we will have to change everything. I think we've made it clear that we don't want to reduce the time for witnesses so that they have the leeway and don't feel rushed.

For these reasons, I'd like us to stick to the main idea, which is to keep the motion as it is. I have full confidence in you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lattanzio.

Having said that, it's important to understand that amendments are always possible. That's why we're continuing our discussions. If there's a consensus, that's fine.

Mr. Beaulieu, who had tabled an amendment, would now like to speak.

Go ahead, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: This may be a final attempt to reach a consensus. In the amendment, we would allow witnesses 10 minutes and ask them to send us their speaking notes 72 hours in advance, if possible. After that, the procedure would remain essentially the same, namely, six minutes to the speakers, in the usual order. In the second round, the only change would be that the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, instead of speaking at the very end with two and a half minutes, could fit in between the Conservatives and Liberals, who would each have five minutes. The Bloc Québécois would then have two and a half minutes and the NDP would have two minutes. The Liberal Party and the Conservative Party would have five minutes each.

This doesn't seem perfectly fair to me, but it's an improvement over the way things are now.

The Chair: That's a given, Mr. Beaulieu.

In these circumstances, I suggest you submit this amendment in due form. You don't need to talk about the 10 minutes. You only have to mention the speaking notes being sent 72 hours in advance if possible. The second part could then be amended as you wish. Once you've tabled it, we'll put it to a vote.

Mr. Beaulieu, try to put something together for us for this amendment.

• (1650)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'll read you the amendment, which goes like this:

That witnesses be given seven and a half minutes for their opening statement. That, if possible, witnesses provide the Committee with their opening remarks 72 hours in advance. 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: Round 1:

Conservative Party
 Liberal Party
 Bloc Québécois
 New Democratic Party;

For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows:

Conservative Party, five minutes
 Liberal Party, five minutes
 Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes
 New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes
 Conservative Party, five minutes
 Liberal Party, five minutes.

The Chair: Okay.

Madam Clerk, tell us what you think.

The Clerk: If there is no further debate, vote on the amendment to the motion and, if it's adopted, vote on the motion as amended.

The Chair: Ms. Lambropoulos, you have the floor.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: This is the last time I will comment on this topic. I would be in complete agreement with the motion if we were to reduce the time for the witnesses' presentations a little. They will be present to answer all our questions during the meeting. So we won't just hear them for five minutes. It is more important that each member of the committee be able to ask questions.

I would agree, whether we change the order or not, because I think the priority is that every member of the committee has the opportunity to ask questions.

Would we be willing to change the time allotted for speeches?

The Chair: We'll see what the members think.

Let's start with Mrs. Lalonde. Then it will be Mr. Beaulieu's turn.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Beaulieu's amendment contains many items.

Would it be possible to vote on certain points of the amendment separately, Mr. Beaulieu?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Absolutely.

I'm not sure whether this is the appropriate time to respond to Ms. Lambropoulos, but we could also compromise and establish that the witnesses have seven and a half minutes.

I'm not sure whether that would work for her.

The Chair: Ms. Lambropoulos, go ahead.

[*English*]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Yes, that sounds logical.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Okay. Then the floor goes to Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Mr. Chair, we can tell the guests that they are not required to speak for 10 minutes. They will have the opportunity to do so, and if they really need 10 minutes, they will have them.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Arseneault, it's your turn.

Mr. René Arseneault: I'm sorry, but I feel like I'm going in circles.

We have often brought in several organizations at the same time. We can't give them less than 10 minutes because of the variety of organizations or representatives who share that time. It's never 10 minutes per organization.

We bring in organizations that are experts in a specific field, and that's why we call them in. I am telling you, 10 minutes is really not a long time. Usually, witnesses need to be interrupted before they're finished. Also, if we have several organizations on a specific issue, I prefer to stick to the 10 minutes and keep things as they are.

In addition, I would suggest that, to address the concerns of Ms. Ashton and Mr. Beaulieu—and we all agree that it should be done by motion—that we defer to the chair to make sure that everyone is able to ask questions in the second round, and that if the time for questions is reduced, it will be in proportion to the time allocated to each party.

• (1655)

The Chair: Ms. Lambropoulos, do you want to speak?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: No, thank you.

[*English*]

Since you recognized me, I'm going to say again that 7.5 minutes would be great, and I would completely support that, Mr. Beaulieu.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Okay.

We'll go to Mr. Duguid, who has his hand up.

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Begrudgingly, Mr. Chair, I would support 7.5 minutes. It's not ideal, but it's between the five and the 10 minutes that we talked about.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Beaulieu, so you can see where this is going.

For the last time, provide us with the full amendment. Then we'll vote on the amendment, after which we'll vote on the motion.

We'll go to Mrs. Lalonde, who wants to comment, followed by Mr. Beaulieu.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Further to my last comment, I was wondering whether Mr. Beaulieu was prepared to have us read his amendment in its entirety, but to vote on the parts of his amendment separately, if that's possible, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Beaulieu, go ahead.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Do you want to split the proposal?

We could vote on the first part and then on the second part, one after the other.

Would that work?

The Chair: The clerk has joined us. I think it would be good to come in with the amendments. We will vote on the amendments and then we will vote on the motion as amended.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Exactly.

Do you want me to read the first part again and then the second part, so that we can vote each time?

The Chair: No, I would rather you read the amendment you want to propose to this motion.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu:

That witnesses be given seven and a half minutes for their opening statement; that, to the extent possible, witnesses provide the Committee with their opening statement 72 hours in advance; and that, at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses in the first round, there be allocated six minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows:

Conservative Party

Liberal Party

Bloc Québécois

New Democratic Party;

For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questions be as follows:

Conservative Party, five minutes

Liberal Party, five minutes

Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes

New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes

Conservative Party, five minutes

Liberal Party, five minutes.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, what do you think?

Ms. Nancy Vohl: Mr. Chair, we have an amendment before us that has a number of different parts. Some might be strict and say that each part is an amendment in itself.

Mrs. Lalonde suggested that we read the final version of your amendment, Mr. Beaulieu, but that we vote on each of its parts. This can certainly be done if the chair wishes to do so.

Is that the case, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, absolutely, and I am pleased to do so. I think that would work for members of the committee as well.

Ms. Nancy Vohl: So there will be a vote on Mr. Beaulieu's amendment. The first part of the amendment states that the witnesses would speak for seven and a half minutes instead of 10 minutes. Does the committee agree?

According to the House motion of September 23, if there is clear consent in the committee, the vote is deemed to be in favour. Otherwise, we have to proceed to a recorded vote.

The Chair: I see one member of the committee objects, so we'll have to have a recorded vote, Madam Clerk.

Ms. Nancy Vohl: The Clerk of the Committee, Ms. Ménard, will call the question.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4).

The Chair: The witnesses will have seven and a half minutes to make their presentations.

Mr. Duguid, you have the floor.

● (1700)

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a question for the clerk. We were going alphabetically during the first round of voting. I notice we are now going by party. What is the usual procedure? It's just to set expectations for the committee.

[Translation]

The Chair: Madam Clerk, you have the floor.

Ms. Nancy Vohl: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Normally the clerk uses a predetermined voting sheet, which we just did. The first votes did not follow that format because we did not have an elected chair yet. Since the committee now has a chair, the voting sheet will be used from now on.

The Chair: Thank you for your comment.

Ms. Ménard, since we have already adopted the part about the speaking time, we have to vote on the other part of the motion.

The Clerk: The next vote is on the second part. It is about the time allotted to each questioner in the second round.

The Chair: Let's see if there's a consensus on that. If not, we will have a recorded vote.

Ms. Nancy Vohl: It seems that Mrs. Lalonde has raised her hand.

The Chair: Mrs. Lalonde, you have the floor.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Chair, I believe Mr. Beaulieu added one more item to the amendment to the motion moved at the very beginning. It had to do with the 72-hour time limit. Madam Clerk, I don't know how you position this in terms of the vote. I'm just asking the question.

Ms. Nancy Vohl: There seemed to be a consensus that 72 hours was the best possible time frame. However, we can certainly take a vote if the committee wishes to do so.

Does the committee agree to the 72-hour time frame?

Since there is agreement, Ms. Ménard can now proceed with the vote on changing the order.

The Chair: You have the floor, Madam Clerk.

● (1705)

The Clerk: Is there consensus or do I have to take a recorded vote?

I see that there is no consensus on this. So we are going to have a recorded vote. I should point out that this is the second part of the motion about changing the order of the parties.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 12; nays 0)

The Chair: The amendment proposed by Mr. Beaulieu was adopted. We'll now go to the motion as amended.

The Clerk: It is time to vote on the motion, as amended. Is there consensus on this?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Chair, if I may, I will continue with the routine motions.

The Chair: Yes, absolutely. The floor is yours.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: The next motion deals with document distribution.

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

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: The next motion deals with working meals.

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

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: The next motion deals with the travel, accommodation and living expenses of witnesses.

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Let us continue, Mrs. Lalonde.

• (1710)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: The next motion deals with access to in camera meetings.

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: You may continue, Mrs. Lalonde.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: The next motion deals with the transcripts of in camera meetings.

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Let us continue.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: The following motion deals with notices of motions.

That a 48 hours notice, interpreted as two nights, shall be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the Committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, provided that (1) the notice be filed with the Clerk of the Committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; that (2) the motion be distributed to Members in both official languages by the Clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour; and that (3) notices received after the deadline hour or on 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.

(Motion agreed to)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: The last routine motion deals with orders of reference from the House respecting bills:

That, in relation to Orders of Reference from the House respecting Bills,

(a) the Clerk of the Committee shall, upon the Committee receiving such an Order of Reference, write to each Member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the Committee to invite those Members to file with the Clerk of the Committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the Bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the Committee consider;

(b) suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a), at least 48 hours prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill to which the amendments relate shall be deemed to be proposed during the said consideration, provided that the Committee may, by motion, vary this deadline in respect of a given Bill; and

(c) during the clause-by-clause consideration of a Bill, the Chair shall allow a Member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before I ask whether or not there is consensus, I see some hands are raised. Is it to comment on this last motion or on what comes next?

Is there consensus on this last motion that was just moved by Mrs. Lalonde?

(Motion agreed to)

• (1715)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you once again, Mr. Chair and colleagues, for your patience while I was reading.

The Chair: That was excellent.

Madam Clerk, did all the routine motions pass at this stage?

The Clerk: Yes.

The Chair: We have just taken an important step. We have three more speakers. Ms. Lambropoulos, Ms. Lattanzio and Mr. Beaulieu have raised their hands.

Ms. Lambropoulos, you have the floor.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to propose a motion that was previously proposed at the last meeting, which we accepted unanimously. I have made some changes to it to reflect the situation with COVID-19. I would like to read the motion, which I have also sent to the clerk. Can it be forwarded to all the members of the committee? It is in both official languages. Do I wait for it to be forwarded to everyone or do I read it?

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Clerk, how do you proceed in this type of situation? Do you send the motion through Zoom, or do you send it to our P9 accounts? How do we do it virtually?

Ms. Nancy Vohl: I will answer, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for the question.

Once again, we are in a situation where, under normal circumstances, notice would have been provided, since the routine motion has just passed. However, because this is the first meeting on committee business, no notice was given. It is up to you, Mr. Chair, to tell us what you prefer. Would you rather we send the motion in both languages right away and wait until committee members have received it before we debate it?

The Chair: I believe that would be one way to do it. We are connected to our devices, so you can send it to our P9 accounts right away. I believe all members have access.

Ms. Nancy Vohl: We will do it right away.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, did you want to comment?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Normally, before a motion is voted on, there has to be 48 hours' notice. Other motions are to be presented, and I want to present some more as well. In this case, it would be better to stick to 48 hours' notice, to give everyone time to provide notice of motions. Then, we can vote knowing exactly what we are doing.

The Chair: I will check with the clerk. As she just said, this is our first meeting. We have just passed the routine motion dealing with the 48 hours' notice.

In my view, a number of motions can be presented to prepare for committee business, but it does not necessarily mean that the motions will be debated in the order in which they are presented. For example, one can present the topics that one would like the committee to address during the session.

Madam Clerk, am I correct?

Ms. Nancy Vohl: Actually, the first thing I would like to clarify with you is whether Ms. Lambropoulos is hereby giving notice of her motion to the committee today or whether she is moving it for immediate debate by the committee. If it is an oral notice to be discussed later, that is fine. If she is moving the motion to open debate immediately, I will read again what the routine motion you just passed says about notices of motion:

That a forty-eight (48) hours notice, interpreted as two (2) 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...

It is up to the chair to define what constitutes a motion not directly related to business currently under consideration by the committee. Right now, the committee seems to be considering what is referred to as "committee business". It is therefore up to the chair to judge whether or not the matter of future business is directly related and whether or not it can be debated.

However, before the chair makes that decision, we should check with Ms. Lambropoulos to see whether she intended to give notice of her motion or to move it for immediate debate.

• (1720)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I wanted to move that we open debate at this meeting. Because we are considering committee business, we do not require 48 hours' notice. That is how it works every time we consider committee business. In addition, I could not provide notice because the committee was not yet struck.

The Chair: All right, thank you.

Before moving on to Mr. Beaulieu, I will give the floor to Ms. Lattanzio and Mr. Blaney.

Ms. Lattanzio, you have the floor.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to say the same thing as my colleague. However, I am keeping my hand up because I also have a motion to put forward.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Blaney, it is your turn.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Essentially, what I have to say is intended to complement the routine motions. I am not planning to introduce formal motions, but I do want to bring to your attention that, on occasion, ministers' appearances have not been televised. In my view, when the committee has the privilege of receiving a minister, it is always in the public interest that the hearing be televised. I bring this to your attention, Mr. Chair, so that it may be taken into consideration when we have notices of motion on this matter.

I would also like to point out to members that, in a previous session, the Standing Committee on Official Languages tabled a report without requesting a response from the government, which is unfortunate. It had to do with the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. It seems to me that, unless otherwise specified, a government response should automatically be requested within 30 days of a report being tabled. Again, it is in the public interest.

These two points remind us how important good motions are to ensure that the committee is as effective as possible, in the public interest.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Clerk, you have the floor.

Ms. Nancy Vohl: Mr. Chair, we should go back to the debate process. First, we clarified Ms. Lambropoulos's intention to move the motion for debate by the committee. As I mentioned, it is up to you to judge whether the motion is in order today. If you were to find it in order, it would be up to you to open debate. If so, what Mr. Blaney has just said should not be moved at this time, because the committee already has another motion before it.

The Chair: That is right. Thank you.

Before responding to Ms. Lambropoulos, I would like to hear from Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Since it is almost 5:30 p.m., I believe we do not have enough time to consider all motions that could be brought forward. In my opinion, it would be better to simply give notice of these motions. We could debate and vote on them at our next meeting.

The Chair: It is indeed 5:25 p.m.

Ms. Lambropoulos said she would have preferred that her motion be debated. I have a decision to make on that. Given the time, I am going to turn off everyone's mics and cameras—I am only joking—to consult with the clerks, Ms. Ménard and Ms. Vohl.

Ladies, could you advise me on how to proceed, given the time and the importance of what Ms. Lambropoulos said?

Mrs. Lalonde, if you don't mind, we are going to listen to what the clerks have to say. I will give you the floor right after that.

• (1725)

Ms. Nancy Vohl: Mr. Chair, are we to understand that you wish to suspend the meeting for a few moments to have a discussion with us?

The Chair: Absolutely.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Chair, if we are going to adjourn the meeting in the next few minutes, I'd like to suggest that I be the first to speak at the next meeting so that we can continue with this motion.

The Chair: Okay, duly noted.

We are going to take a short break so I can speak with the clerks. We will be back in a moment.

• (1725)

(Pause)

• (1735)

The Chair: We will now continue the meeting.

Colleagues, now that I have consulted the clerks, here is what I suggest to you.

We heard what Ms. Lambropoulos just said. Since it is 5:35 p.m., I think it would be advisable for us to agree that she can send her motion as a notice to committee members. That way, all the other members can also send motions they wish to debate. So, at the next meeting, we would address committee business and we would start with the motion that Ms. Lambropoulos sent.

Since we will then have had the 48 hours' notice, we will have time to read the motions from all members and to debate them in the time allotted for committee business. Then we can establish our work schedule for future meetings.

Mrs. Lalonde wishes to speak. We will then go to Mr. Beaulieu.

It is true that we have no further commitments after this. We could decide to move forward a bit today, but ideally, we will do what I just proposed.

Let us hear from Mrs. Lalonde, Mr. Beaulieu and Mr. Dalton.

Mrs. Lalonde, you have the floor.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I certainly agree with what you have proposed. However, I would like us to follow the speaking order. I know, I am insisting a little bit on protocol, but I believe it is important to show respect for my colleague Ms. Lambropoulos, who was the first to want to speak. Then I saw that Ms. Lattanzio, Mr. Beaulieu and Mr. Blaney had their hands up.

By the way, Mr. Blaney, I want to tell you that if you wish to make a formal motion about what you were saying, you are welcome to do so. We look forward to hearing your motion and debating it here at this fine committee.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I have no objection to that, as long as everyone can send their motions as a notice. That way, all members will have seen the motions. We will see whether Ms. Lambropoulos's comes first. We could always decide to prioritize the motions right away. Or we might oppose one motion and give priority to another. We will see what the procedures are at that time. That is fine by me.

The Chair: Okay.

Before we move on to Mr. Dalton, I need to explain what I proposed.

Ms. Lambropoulos said that she would present her motion as a notice of motion provided that the committee debates her motion first. That does not mean it will be in a working session. Rather, it will be during the time allotted to committee business. Members will then decide which motion the committee should address first. I just wanted to make that clear.

Mr. Dalton, you have the floor.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to know whether we are going to meet every Tuesday at the same time. Has that been determined?

The Chair: I will consult the clerk, but I can tell you that we cannot know right now, because there are several committees and the whips of all parties have to discuss among themselves the best time to have meetings. I believe the committees are certainly going to sit, but we cannot know right now how many times a week or when we are going to meet.

Mr. Marc Dalton: I would like us to meet next week, because we have not made any decisions about the motions. If I need to make a motion to that effect, I am prepared to do so, but I feel we should meet next week.

• (1740)

The Chair: It is not up to me.

However, if you have motions to put forward, you may do it now. That way, at the next meeting, the 48 hours' notice will have been given and we can then address them during the time allotted to committee business, proceeding in the agreed-upon manner.

I saw some of you raise your hands.

We will hear from Mrs. Lalonde and then Mr. Arseneault.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I believe Mr. Arseneault raised his hand before I did.

Mr. Arseneault, I yield to you.

Mr. René Arseneault: How polite, how kind! That is Ontario for you.

Coming back to our colleague Mr. Dalton's question, I believe the whips are doing it right now. I am not privy to divine secrets, but I believe the whips are negotiating the schedule. I could be wrong, Mr. Chair. Let us talk to our respective parties, because it is happening right now.

The Chair: Excellent, thank you.

Mrs. Lalonde, you gave up your turn. Would you like to speak again?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I was going to make the same suggestion as my colleague Mr. Arseneault. The whips really do handle it.

Mr. Dalton, I strongly encourage you to speak with your Conservative whip, so that he can better respond to your request about the business of this committee; its members have always managed to work well together.

The Chair: I'm very pleased to see that the committee is willing to get to work right away. It is a very good thing. We have not met since March.

With that, dear committee members, it is 5:42 p.m. We have had an excellent first meeting, I feel. We must continue to maintain this lovely harmony.

Before we adjourn, Ms. Lattanzio would like to speak.

[*English*]

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Chair, I just want to make a motion to adjourn today's meeting. It's as simple as that.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: All right, excellent.

Madam Clerk, a motion has been made to adjourn the meeting.

The Clerk: Do we all agree to adjourn the meeting?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I therefore wish all committee members, as well as the analysts, interpreters and technicians, a great evening.

I look forward to seeing you all again.

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