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Chair: Ms. Ruby Sahota



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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.)): Good morning. I call this meeting to order. Welcome to meeting number 34 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Today's meeting is a committee business meeting on the issue of Mr. Blaikie's motion, which he moved at the last meeting. The meeting will be webcast on the House of Commons website and it's taking place in hybrid format, as all of you know.

Tomorrow will be the last day of hybrid format meetings. I don't know—maybe some of you might have more knowledge than I do as to whether there have been any discussions about extending that or not. As far as I'm aware, the agreement for hybrid meetings goes until June 23. After that, the House will rise, and generally committees do not meet when the House is not sitting.

On top of that, there will be a maintenance blackout period from June 30 to July 15 and then once again from August 23 to September 10, during which time committees will not be able to sit. I guess from time to time for exceptional circumstances committees do sit in the summer, but during the times I mentioned they would not be able to.

I just wanted to let all of you know about that before we continue on to Mr. Blaikie's motion.

I don't think anyone is participating in the room today. Everyone is attending virtually, so please just remember to unmute yourselves and to have your interpretation language selected. Also unmute yourselves if you have a point of order, and if you would like to speak to Mr. Blaikie's motion, then raise your hand in the toolbar below.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): I would just add to this part of the conversation—and Kirsty could probably speak to this as well—that I think the only thing we might have when it comes to committees would be if there were a Standing Order 106(4) meeting and everything had to be done in person. At this time we have heard of no extension. I know there are discussions about this, but there has been no agreement on meeting during the summer when it comes to the hybrid format.

I just wanted to add that for your knowledge.

The Chair: Yes, thank you. In the last couple of days, I haven't heard anything, but just as for that last meeting we had, sometimes some of you hear about it even before I do. For that extra meeting, you guys heard about that before I was able to hear about that on

Friday, but that worked out nicely for us because we were able to complete that report on Bill C-19 that I then tabled that yesterday, for your information, as well. That report was tabled, so we tabled the prorogation study and the Bill C-19 study, and as far as I know, just as Ms. Vecchio has confirmed, at this point in time, we would not be able to sit in the summer unless it was in person and outside of those blackout periods.

We will move back to Mr. Blaikie's motion, and I will give Mr. Blaikie the floor.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I think I managed to put most of my thoughts—for now anyway, not having heard any other discussion—on the record last day and I just want to express some appreciation again for the opportunity to discuss this motion and to the folks over at Fair Vote and all the people who support them who have worked so well over the last while to keep this issue on the radar and to collaborate, in the best sense of that word, in the preparation of this motion.

With that, Madam Chair, I'll cede the floor to my colleagues, and I look forward to hearing their thoughts on the matter.

The Chair: Okay. That's efficient. I was expecting some more comments than that, but I accept that you did explain your motion quite well in the last meeting as well, so we will move on to Ms. Vecchio.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you very much.

Thanks very much, Daniel. I know that this is a really very important study for you and I know that we have discussed it several times.

I would like to move an amendment to this though. What I would like to do is this. In your motion I would like to add after the word “reform” in paragraph (f) the following:

including the need for a national referendum in order for Canadians to have the opportunity to approve and propose changes to Canada's democratic system.

That is what we're looking at for our amendment. I know we have it in English. I have the English done and we will ensure that we get the French one to Alain as soon as possible as well, but as we're looking at this I think one of the most important things—and we saw this when we were talking about Bill C-19—is that the impact of elections is very, very important. When we talk about democracy, we're talking about the need for 15 million people to have the ability and the right to vote specifically during a pandemic, and I think this is just an opportunity for Canadians to say what our electoral system looks like.

That is the amendment I would like to move, and we will get that out to you as soon as possible.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Vecchio.

Next we have Mr. Turnbull.

You're keeping Scott Reid's legacy of referendums alive. He was the champion of referendums on the electoral reform committee. I can see that you're still championing that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Chair, will the amendment be introduced in French as well?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Of course.

What we're working on right now, Alain, is to ensure that you have that French version. I can put it for you in the French version if you like, but I don't think it would make any sense.

We will get that right to you.

The Chair: Will that be in a few minutes or so?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes.

[*English*]

The Chair: In a few minutes. Okay.

We're on Ms. Vecchio's amendment now.

Now we will move to Mr. Turnbull.

• (1110)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): I definitely have some thoughts on Mr. Blaikie's motion, but if we're on Ms. Vecchio's amendment, then maybe I will cede the floor to my colleague, Mr. Lauzon, and hope to perhaps get on with a vote on that amendment.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

I know that you were hinting at an amendment last time as well, so you may have an amendment to the main motion. Once we deal with Ms. Vecchio's, then perhaps you'll be able to move that.

Mr. Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to talk about Mr. Blaikie's notice of motion and the amendment that we are proposing. We still haven't received the French version. I will hold off before talking about Ms. Vecchio's amendment. So, I'll skip my turn for the moment.

If nobody wishes to speak, I would suggest that we adjourn the meeting while we wait for Ms. Vecchio's amendment. We could resume in a few minutes.

[*English*]

The Chair: We can suspend if needed.

Mr. Blaikie's hand is up at this point. I just wanted to get through the hands and see if we get that circulated by then. I'm very willing to suspend for a short time after we hear from Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Blaikie, go ahead.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Perhaps it will be the case that folks on the committee will have what they need in order to participate in the discussion by the time I'm finished my remarks.

What I'd like to say is that I don't think the amendment really contributes to the best spirit of the motion. I think many of my colleagues on the committee will be familiar with the debate around a referendum that was had in a very fulsome way—and I know you are, Madam Chair, having sat on that Special Committee on Electoral Reform.

The referendum was one of the hot topics, if you will. I'm sure colleagues on the committee who bore witness and participated in that process will know that the Special Committee on Electoral Reform did in fact recommend a referendum as part of a way forward. That was a compromise that was forged among many different parties at that time for a parliamentary-led process.

I've always been of the view, and I think New Democrats largely have been of the view, that if a party has an electoral mandate to change the voting system, then a referendum is not necessarily required, and that's part of the [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and mandate building that happens in a general election.

In this case what we're talking about is a study of how a citizens' assembly would work. In fact, I think one of the questions the citizens' assembly ought to pronounce itself on is the process for moving ahead with changing the voting system, and that includes the question of the referendum. I think that's a discussion that needs to happen again. I think it should happen in a forum that's less politicized. That's the proposal, anyway, of a citizens' assembly. It's to allow that conversation to happen in a forum that is not led by partisan political actors.

For as much as there was a bit of a compromise forged on the committee last time—and I think we saw a willingness by political players, as it were, to lean on a referendum or to incorporate a referendum in order to get buy-in from many different parties about how to move forward—the citizens' assembly is an alternative way of moving forward. I think if it's going to do its best work, it's important not to prejudice the outcome of that process. I think the nature and virtue...one of the selling features of the citizens' assembly is that it is an open-ended process, where citizens get to engage directly in the policy-making process.

Not only at the outset of launching a citizens' assembly, but if in the very idea of this committee of Parliament studying the notion of a citizens' assembly we're going to already pronounce on a foundational question about what that process looks like, I think we would be making a mistake. There will be lots of time to discuss the value of a referendum. I hope that a citizens' assembly discusses that. There will be need for parliamentary action even after a citizens' assembly, and I'm quite confident there will be an appropriate parliamentary forum for that debate to be had.

I don't think that at this committee at this time, while we're looking at simply studying what a citizens' assembly would look like, it's the appropriate time to already pronounce on those kinds of constraints on the [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to get the most value out of the process. We won't get the most value out of the study on what that process would look like if we've already set tight parameters on key outcomes.

That's why I'm not enthusiastic about this amendment. I wanted to offer those thoughts.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you.

It's just been sent out. You should be seeing it in your inbox within a minute or so.

We will move on to the next speaker.

Mr. Nater, go ahead.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I see that the translated amendment is now out and into the inboxes of our fellow members. I just want to say a few brief comments about this amendment and why I believe that fundamentally it needs to be included.

First, for some background, we can look at different regions and provinces that have employed a citizens' assembly. I am obviously more familiar with Ontario. It was my home province in the 2007 referendum that was held in conjunction with 2007 provincial election. The recommendations from that citizens' assembly were included as a referendum as part of that election.

Fundamentally, I believe that no changes to the way we elect parliamentarians, to the way we go about electing a government in Canada, should be done without first having the approval of the Canadian public. The obvious way of doing that is through a nationwide referendum, which is why I fundamentally believe that if we're going to go down this path of looking at or studying a citi-

zens' assembly, I think there need to be a few markers in place now, at the beginning, for what we fundamentally believe should be included as part of that process.

From a Conservative perspective, I don't think it comes as a surprise to anyone that our position hasn't changed significantly since we studied this as part of electoral reform—that is, any change needs to be done through a referendum. That's where we stand. That's where we're putting down our markers and that's obviously why we introduced this amendment.

We're not opposed to the motion. We're not opposed to having a comprehensive study of citizens' assemblies. Frankly, I think it's a worthwhile enterprise to have this review, but we are laying the groundwork. We are laying markers at the beginning that as the Conservative Party we believe in Canadians having a say on how they do that. That's where we're coming from.

Again, as I said, I don't want to take too much time on this, because I'm sure that I see a few other hands up, and I know that the amendment is now in the inboxes. I will yield the floor and we will carry on.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nater.

I definitely can say that your position has been consistent on that.

We'll move on to hear from Mr. Turnbull now.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I want to say just briefly that I wholeheartedly agree with my colleague Mr. Blaikie's assessment. I feel that this amendment foreshadows or predicts an outcome to an open process that's supposed to be deliberative.

In these types of deliberative processes, I think there are probably many ways at the tail end of a national citizens' assembly to verify, validate or gauge the public's overall reception to recommendations or solutions that are put forward as a result of the process. I think this binds that group, through their deliberations, to an outcome that may not be the best possible result or outcome from all of their deliberations. I think it's counter to the national citizens' assembly and the objectives that I think they normally have.

I would note that there are many examples of national citizens' assemblies or citizens' assemblies not at a national level that have not concluded with a referendum of any kind. There are quite a few examples of those. It's not like it's necessary per se. It may very well be necessary, but again, the whole point is that in this citizen-focused deliberative process those citizens are coming to that conclusion themselves through the process, and if they were to recommend a national referendum, I suppose that would carry a lot of weight through the integrity of that process.

That's the way I see it. I just wanted to express my point of view. Thanks.

• (1120)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Turnbull. I appreciate that.

Mr. Lauzon.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you very much.

We read our colleague's amendment.

A national referendum may certainly be necessary in some cases. However, when it comes to collecting recommendations to improve the electoral reform process, I believe that if we create a professional, rigorous national committee that has all the expertise and resources needed to gather information and take Canadians' pulse on the issue, we wouldn't need a referendum.

I agree with Mr. Blaikie. We aren't properly evaluating the impact of the results of a referendum held today, when compared to referendums in the past. The technology and communications means that we have today—just look at how we created a hybrid Parliament—make it possible to take Canadians' pulse by creating a committee. I believe that this would give us a very clear idea of which recommendations to implement.

That said, we will return to Mr. Blaikie's motion to make comments on it. The important thing now is to settle the debate on Ms. Vecchio's motion. Then, we can perhaps suggest more detailed amendments to Mr. Blaikie's motion for the benefit of Canadians and our democracy.

I'll now give the floor to someone else.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I guess a brief lesson for everyone on the hazards of speaking before seeing things in writing...as I considered the Conservative amendment, I thought what I heard was a condition requiring a referendum after a national citizens' assembly on their findings. What I see in the amendment as written is that it would simply include the question of a referendum in the questions that the committee would consider as part of its study.

Again, what I said before is true, in that I'm not enthusiastic about the amendment, but I don't think it hurts for the committee to talk about that in the context of their study. My hope would be that they don't put any constraints on the citizens' assembly at the outset, because one of its important virtues is the open-endedness of that process.

I also think that part of the spirit of this motion and the push for a citizens' assembly is exactly to avoid relitigating some of the intractable disputes of the last Parliament's process.

In the spirit of building wider support for this motion and bringing people on board and setting up this study, I would be prepared to support the amendment as simply introducing that question. I do think it's a question that will be settled either way. We will either have a referendum or we won't. It will be part of the conversation both through the committee's study, I'm sure, and also in the context of a citizens' assembly, whether or not to have one.

I would be prepared to support adding this wording if it means we will be building a wider consensus that this is an issue we have to address and a process that we should be embarking upon.

In the best sense of a parliamentary give and take in the debate, having expressed some skepticism about the amendment before, having seen it in writing now and hearing some of the comments, I would be prepared to support the inclusion of the amendment in the motion.

● (1125)

The Chair: I accidentally keep turning my camera off today instead of hitting the mute button. I didn't mean to do that. I just realized that you couldn't see me.

Mr. Therrien, have you had an opportunity to take a look at the email?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Yes.

My position has slightly changed following Mr. Blaikie's presentation.

Personally, I wasn't firmly opposed to the idea of having a referendum. However, after hearing how people reacted, I realized that it wouldn't go forward. That's why I thought that Ms. Vecchio's amendment should include the notion of conditionality. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] ask for a referendum, so that we can gain public support for it.

That said, Mr. Blaikie told us that he didn't disapprove of having a referendum. He can correct me if I'm wrong. To be honest, I must admit that I would support the mover of the motion, because I think that it is an appealing idea. I believe that it would boil down to further democratizing our democracy. I don't know if that's the right way to put it or if that is possible, but I like the idea.

If Mr. Blaikie has no issues with passing Ms. Vecchio's motion, it would be very ill-advised for me not to support it.

That's what I had to say about this topic.

[English]

The Chair: Being able to see the motion in writing has definitely clarified what the position is. That has definitely helped smooth things out, and that was my wish for today's meeting: that we have a smooth meeting today.

Let's hear from Mr. Lauzon, and hopefully we're getting somewhere.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Here is what the French version says:

, y compris la nécessité d'un référendum national afin que les Canadiens aient la possibilité d'approuver tout changement proposé au système démocratique du Canada;

Everything that comes after “national” is okay. However, “y compris la nécessité d'un référendum national” implies that this is an obligation. It is a commitment. According to what Mr. Blaikie said, the motion does not appear to give the committee the option to decide whether to have a referendum.

All issues that are related to electoral reform and that the committee as such [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] relevant. If we want to modify a rule with the end goal of changing the electoral system, then it certainly becomes important. This is good, and is included in Mr. Blaikie's motion.

However, there is a grey area: the “y compris la nécessité”. The necessity is an order and a specific target. It isn't neutral.

Personally, I believe that the moment that the committee adopts a change that is deemed relevant, we will automatically be bound to have a national referendum.

I'm no French teacher, but I can tell you that my understanding of this part of the amendment is identical to Mr. Blaikie's initial assessment of it. I believe that we are committing to necessarily having a referendum if that is deemed relevant by the committee.

• (1130)

[*English*]

The Chair: I see your point, Mr. Lauzon. I think the language could have been selected a little bit more carefully, but at the end of the day, all the committee would be doing if we did pass this motion is doing a study. We wouldn't be setting up a national assembly; we wouldn't be having the referendum; we would just be studying all of these things in one basket. It's just including another thing in that study—for us to report back to the House on whether or not a national referendum is needed. We would be looking at the need for one, and you could be reporting back that one is not needed or that one is needed. It's just being added into the things to consider in that study—to report back to the House. I hope that helps clarify everything.

Conservative members, is that okay? Is that your understanding of what you're proposing? That's how I see it and that is what we would be doing. We wouldn't actually be setting one up ourselves in this committee, but we would be recommending how to do so and the framework for that.

Ms. Petitpas Taylor.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

On behalf of the group, happy birthday, first and foremost. Thank you for sharing your birthday with us, with the PROC family members.

I have a quick question. When I was listening to Mr. Blaikie's opening statements about this amendment, my first inclination [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] outcome of the study by including the referendum. Then from there, we had further discussions, and you've clarified in indicating that we are really going to be studying the issue related to a national referendum, but I'm still really unclear with respect to the language that's presented, and I fear that we're opening a door here that we don't even know that we're opening. I don't want to put the Conservatives or Karen on the spot, but

I'm wondering if we could get a bit of clarification on that. I'm not opposed to moving forward, but I want to make sure that we know exactly what we are agreeing to right now, so perhaps we could ask for a bit of clarification if that's okay, and then from there, we can continue this conversation.

Thank you.

The Chair: Yes, that's always helpful. Thank you.

Mrs. Vecchio, go ahead.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes, thanks very much.

I think the one thing that's really important is reading the preamble to that, before you get into the (a), (b), (c) and the alphabet, because as it clearly indicates, “the committee's study shall include an examination of”, and then you get into your letters of (a), (b), (c) and (d). This is clearly [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] “shall include an examination of”. I think you're talking about that word “need”. I understand that is of great concern. Perhaps you have a different word that you think we could put in there that would still come up with the same idea. I think going into the preamble and how that all links together is probably the most important in this. Use your comas. I'm looking back to my grade 11 English teacher, and I think the thing is it's just the way it's written, so go back to the very beginning and then start putting in those points after. I hope that helps you.

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Really quickly, perhaps we could replace the word “need” with the word “option”. It might be a little bit easier in terms of the language to interpret it as an option. I think “option” is more true to it.

The Chair: So it would be “including the option for a national referendum”. Okay.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I don't accept that as a friendly amendment, just FYI. I hear what he's saying about an option, but I want something that shows more that need and the fact that these are things that have to go forward. I think this is adding a lot of water to the wine.

The Chair: Fair enough. Mrs. Vecchio doesn't see it as a friendly amendment. Is that a subamendment that you've just moved? I'm not clear. Were you looking to see whether she would consider it a friendly amendment? She does not.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Yes, I think I'd like to move it as a subamendment, if I could.

• (1135)

The Chair: All right, so there's a subamendment to the amendment, and that is to change one word.

Members, do any of you need clarification? Do you have Mrs. Vecchio's amendment in front of you?

At least in the English and in the French.... Mr. Turnbull, maybe you can go ahead and read it out.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Sure. I'll read the English version of it. So (f) would read:

Any other matters the committee deems pertinent to voting reform, including the option for a national referendum in order for Canadians to have the opportunity to approve any proposed changes to Canada's democratic system.

Really, the only change is that the word “need” becomes the word “option”.

To Mrs. Vecchio's point, if this isn't imposing some kind of a condition or a mandatory element to the process, then I think it's an option, and that better reflects what the intention of it was based on the conversation. I don't know why anyone would be opposed to that.

The Chair: We're going to have Justin let you know where to find that in the French text. He'll read it out in French for us.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Justin Vaive): Mr. Turnbull's subamendment would replace “la nécessité” with “l'option” in the French wording of the motion.

The motion would therefore become:

f) toute autre question liée à la réforme électorale que le Comité jugera pertinente, y compris l'option d'un référendum national afin que les Canadiens aient la possibilité d'approuver tout changement proposé au système démocratique du Canada;

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, I'll hear from Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. Happy Birthday.

The Chair: Oh, thank you.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I never have to worry about working on my birthday.

The Chair: I always had exams, and I think we had an all-night vote at one point, so this reminds me of the high-school years again in some ways.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I think I remember working one day in my entire life on my birthday, and that was a while ago.

The Chair: Lucky you.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Well, when you're born on Christmas Day, you don't normally have to go to work.

The Chair: It's you and the Prime Minister.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Well, I was first. Anyway, I don't brag about that.

I wanted to speak to the amendment, but now I'm speaking I guess to the subamendment moved by Mr. Turnbull.

I don't think it changes what I want to say. I just want to reassure colleagues that there's nothing really here if we leave the wording as it is. The citizens' assembly is going to do what it's going to do, but based on the terms of reference which are set out in paragraph (a) of this motion of Mr. Blaikie's.

All we're doing, as Conservatives, is asking the question of whether or not we should have witnesses appear before this study to speak to whether or not there is a need for a national referendum on something as significant as changing how we elect people. I am

presuming, by the wording in this motion, that it's how we elect people in the House of Commons only.

Maybe Mr. Blaikie can answer my questions on this. I have some concerns about only proposing to change one part of a bicameral Parliament. We've seen the unilateral change to one part of our bicameral Parliament implemented by the government now. If people were being honest with themselves around this table, how is that working out? It's not necessarily working out the way that people predicted it would.

I think we should be asking the question, as members of Parliament, to witnesses who appear before the committee as to whether or not a national referendum is actually needed. Everything we do is an option, so using the word “option” is like using the word “the”. It actually makes the words meaningless. We either need one or we don't. It's yes or it's no.

I just think that we're losing the value of the amendment by changing the word from “need” to an “option”, keeping in mind, like I said, that this isn't predetermining any of the terms of reference, should this committee actually adopt this motion and pursue a report. That's clearly laid out in paragraph (a) in Mr. Blaikie's motion, “the terms of reference for such an assembly”. That will be where we need to have that conversation.

As a member of Parliament, I would like to think that we would, as a procedure and House affairs committee, be studying the impacts, not only of the significant proposed changes that might come about for the House of Commons.... I'm not predetermining any of those outcomes.

Look, the reality is that I'd be a member of the governing party right now if we had proportional representation in the last election, because we had the most votes. The notion isn't lost on me. I just think we should be able to ask very direct questions, have witnesses summoned before the committee to talk about the establishment of this national citizens' assembly and talk about how we get to that determination. I want witnesses to appear before the committee to talk about whether or not we need a referendum on this.

● (1140)

The Chair: Fair enough. Thank you, Mr. Calkins.

I did include that in my comments earlier, too, that this is asking whether it's needed or not needed, but there were committee members who felt uncomfortable with that word. We therefore have a subamendment before us.

We'll hear from Mr. Blaikie on that.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would just say that any Canadians who may be listening at home are getting a little bit of a window into some of the deliberations that happen in camera around committee reports. They perhaps are experiencing some of the frustration that members routinely feel in those meetings about the kinds of things that can light up as an issue unexpectedly.

For me, coming from a construction background, [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] a deck. It's appropriate at the outset to examine the need for a permit. The language isn't prejudicial there. That is to say, if you're examining the need for a permit, it doesn't mean you've already decided you need one. If you're building a deck in the city of Winnipeg that's less than 24 inches above grade, you don't need a permit. The conclusion of your investigation for the need for a permit will be that you don't need one. If the deck that you're building is 24 inches or higher above grade, the conclusion of your examination as to whether or not you need a permit will be that you do need a permit.

To me, the language here isn't too important. What's important is all the other items of the motion. As I say, one of the things I'd like to do is bring as many people along as possible. I think if Liberals on the committee could see their way to appreciating my niche semantic argument, perhaps [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] bring everyone along in supporting this motion. I think that would be a great thing. I'm happy to leave the wording as is, if that means that our Conservative colleagues will come along.

I do think the question of a referendum is one that any body, whether it's a committee or a citizens' assembly, will have to tackle in some way, shape or form. I take the Conservative amendment as just indicating the need to address that question. It's fair to flag that. I have no doubt that it will be part of the debate. It was a very important point of debate. Although I have, I think, ultimately some different feelings from my Conservative colleagues on the committee about the necessity of a referendum, I do think that question, whether it's necessary or not, needs to be addressed in any credible effort to change the voting system.

I'm happy to leave the amendment as it is and move on. We've heard that [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] committee had some [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] as well. I think Mr. Turnbull foreshadowed what that might be at our last meeting. I'm excited to hear his proposal and perhaps improve the motion in that way as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Blaikie.

We'll vote now on Mr. Turnbull's subamendment, changing the word "need" to "option".

(Subamendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (1145)

The Chair: Okay. We're back on Mr. Blaikie's motion as amended by Ms. Vecchio's addition of the referendum.

We'll move on to Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thanks, Madam Chair, and happy birthday again.

I too have some thoughts on making a proposed amendment to Mr. Blaikie's motion.

As I mentioned last time, I'm very passionate about the national citizens' assembly being a method of participatory action and research. I think there are many benefits to just opening up this study or this motion to include broader implications for how a national citizens' assembly could be used, because I think the way that Mr. Blaikie has structured his motion is really good in terms of outlining the terms of reference and what the timeline would look like.

I think there are many aspects of how you design and implement a national citizens' assembly that really matter. I think that's the heart of this motion to me: taking into consideration all of those design elements of a process that I think are very substantive and beneficial for building a more inclusive democracy.

Maybe I'll give you the language of my amendment and then speak to you a bit more about why I feel this is important.

The Chair: Right after you read it or while you're reading it, can you also give us a copy so we can start circulating it while you speak to it?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I've already sent it to the clerk.

The Clerk: Madam Chair, I'll be sending it out just as he moves it. It will be sent out momentarily.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you so much, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: No problem.

I would like to move that the motion be amended by adding after "(a)-(f)" at the very end of the motion the following:

and that the committee, in the course of this study, also examine the question of how citizen assemblies can be used more generally as a tool to drive citizen engagement in the policy-making process on a wide variety of issues and report its findings to the House in a separate report.

I would like to just speak to this a little bit. I won't take up too much of the committee's time, but this is an area of considerable passion, and it relates to my expertise from my work as a social innovation expert over many years.

The way I see it is that there's a move from a participatory democracy to a deliberative democracy. It's sort of a higher standard, in a sense, in that citizens can engage in the decision-making of the policy-making process. They get to consider relevant information, discuss the issues, come up with options, evaluate those options and develop their thinking together before coming to a common view. This is really significant in terms of a contribution to the health of our democracy. There's been quite a [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] given to this methodology of a citizens' assembly. I think there are other methodologies, as well, that we could look at. We could actually look at options for how a national citizens' assembly could include some of the other methodologies that are out there.

One that I'm really familiar with is called collective impact, which has had a considerable paradigm shift within the non-profit and charitable sector. Many of the funders across Canada, in fact, are using this methodology of collective impact for tackling large systemic issues like the decarbonization of our economy, for example, and many others, like children's health and nutrition and sustainable food systems. It integrates what we call systems thinking.

I've done this work for 12 years. This is my background: 350 projects over 12 years on all kinds of issues, from housing and homelessness to children's nutrition to immigrant and refugee...to homelessness in the city of Toronto. The list goes on and on. However, the point that I want to make here—and why this has so much potential that I feel really strongly about—is that I think it starts to get at the root causes of the issue in a unique way. It allows a cross-section of stakeholders. In this case, in a national citizens' assembly, it's structured kind of like a large jury. You're taking a quasi-random selection of citizens or laypersons who get to participate in this deliberative process. In a sense, they're policy-makers or solution designers for a complex issue.

The benefit of this, from my perspective, is that people with very different perspectives in the world, very different reference points in a system, different levels of expertise, get to actually deliberate. They share information. They present their diverse points of view, and they really tackle or try to make sense of various information so that they come up with a shared understanding of the problem they're trying to tackle.

In this case, with Mr. Blaikie's motion, it's electoral reform, which is a highly complex issue. However, there are many other complex issues that I think Canada is confronting and we're trying to tackle today, that our government has been steadfast at working on and trying to get to the root causes of those issues. I will say that it's challenging sometimes. What I've found through my practice in this area is that the real shifts happen in large groups when they process information and come to an insight about reframing a problem that's been around for a long time. Part of the power of these processes is that citizens actually undertake a process where they come to realize the variety of perspectives that are out there.

• (1150)

Through that process, through the respect for the diversity of all the different points of view, they come to a better, deeper understanding of a complex systemic problem that they then can reframe together. At the same time, they're developing a shared understanding. In that process, we get a lot of benefits for Canadians. We get a lot of benefits for the policy-making process, and we get a lot of benefits for our democracy.

In my world, you include things like rapid prototyping in it, which is an innovation methodology. Citizens can participate in rapid prototyping solutions, which are sort of an uninhibited way of generating ideas. There are all kinds of other things that I can say about methodologies that relate to how we might design a really effective process.

I think the most important part of it is that process really matters. The design of the process is, I think, the heart, because it has to be inclusive; it has to be diverse; it has to be facilitated in a way that truly brings the minorities, the voices on the fringe, into the centre

of the conversation. That's how you reframe problems, because the reality of it is that many of the problems we have that are really deeply entrenched are ones on which we've been stuck in a certain dynamic for a long time and have tried certain solutions. We've tried to whittle away....

Think about food insecurity rising in this country. We live in one of the most prosperous, I think, high-quality-of-life countries in the world, and we have food insecurity. It's a shame that we actually have such high levels of food insecurity. You think, how can an agriculturally rich country with the vastness and natural resources and the quality of life that we have actually have children who are malnourished, who are not getting enough to eat?

Over time, we've tried to get at the root causes, but we really haven't. We haven't got at the root causes, so we have to reframe and understand the problems more deeply.

This isn't a criticism of any government. This is, I think, part and parcel of being stuck in a very specific set of relationships and power dynamics, and a way of understanding the problem that won't allow us to get to new, really innovative solutions that get at the core.

I think I'm being a bit verbose here, so I apologize, but I will just say that there are some things that I think are really important to consider in designing these processes, in which I think the process really matters. For instance, a clearly outlined purpose [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] involves how you recruit those people and account for a self-selection kind of bias. Think about people who say they don't want to participate. They're randomly selected, but then they say "No, I don't want to participate." We know it takes time and money and resources to participate in a process like this, so how do we get voices in the process that might be excluded if we don't basically include those voices that tend to be excluded?

The other thing is that there is often an overrepresentation of certain voices, even within the random selection of citizens, so I think the facilitation of the process really matters and the time scale of the process really matters. I think one of the criticisms of national citizen assemblies is that they take a long time and they can't turn on a dime. It takes time to develop a shared understanding of a complex problem.

Where does it fit in the policy-making process? That's another big question I have, because I think it could be right up front at the very beginning. I read some academics and people who feel it could be integrated even into the Senate in some way, so I think there are a lot of questions around this. That's why I think it's important that this motion also include a broader reflection on how this could be used for many other issues.

• (1155)

I would like to see us look at how we tackle systemic racism in this country at a national level and use this type of process for that, or how we might have it aid in reconciliation with indigenous people. To me, that is extremely important. I think there are a lot of... Food security is another one that I feel passionate about, but I'm sure we all have many other issues that we could see this being applied to.

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*] I just want to make sure that I cover this because this is what I'm passionate about this, as you can tell. I think people want more say in what their governments do in general. I think this gives people a sense of agency in the process that they wouldn't otherwise have. It facilitates learning. It transcends the polarization of our political dialogue, which I think is one of the really key values to this type of process. I think it can account for regional differences in Canada, which I think often lead to polarization in our dialogues and debates.

You get buy-in on solutions that are proposed from many different stakeholders, who then may naturally row in the same direction. It engenders trust in the democratic process and the institutions. It builds agreement and acceptance around policy decisions. It demonstrates the many challenges in understanding and tackling complex issues.

I think that sometimes we're tackling these issues and there are other actors in our systems that are tackling these issues, but for whatever reason, the policy-making process is in a bit of silo, and it's very hard to integrate the many actors that are closer to the issue, closer on the ground and who in a way have more expertise than many of us do as policy-makers, but it's very hard to bridge that gap. I think this may be a tool to do that. I think it promotes mutual respect within the diversity and the alternative points of view represented in a process like this. It can really aid us. I fear that our country is becoming more polarized in its debates and dialogues on key issues. I really think that this would have an effect of promoting more diversity and mutual respect of those alternative points of view.

This has been used in Ireland, Scotland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Poland, the U.K., the U.S. and Canada, and there is no a priori limit to what it could be applied to. I think this is an opportunity for Canada to play a leadership role in integrating some of these methodologies, and the national citizens' assembly is one that I think has a lot of potential.

Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to my colleagues for allowing me the space and time to express my point of view on something I'm quite passionate about. I hope you'll support the amendment.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Vecchio.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thanks very much.

I have just a couple of things on this one. First of all, I think what it's doing is taking Daniel's motion and talking about even doing a second report. I'm actually wondering if he is trying to bulldoze

through Daniel's first action, because Daniel has said that what he wants to do is focus specifically on electoral reform, and that is exactly what this motion is about. This amendment is taking it from doing something very specific to something extremely grand.

When I look at what the mandate of this committee is, I can't find a single thing that goes with what Mr. Turnbull is saying here. This has nothing to do with it when it comes to the procedures and affairs of the House of Commons. I recognize that these are all important issues. I too have many concerns when it comes to security, child care and a variety of very important social issues, but I think those issues need to be addressed in places where they are a part of the mandate, such as the human resources and skills development committee.

I recognize that you're trying to look at a procedural thing when it comes to the assembly, but this is way outside the scope of the House of Commons, as well as outside the scope of this specific committee. I would even question, when we're talking about this, how we would even have a second report and if this is actually even procedurally correct to be doing right now, as we are focused on one, and Mr. Turnbull has put in a request for a second report. Should we not actually just do one report rather than coming up with two?

There are just a few things. I just find that this was.... I feel like I'm back to 101 days of filibustering.

Thanks.

The Chair: Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I just want to say that I think the amendment makes a lot of sense in that what we're going to be hearing in the course of this study, should it proceed.... Of course, we would need the motion to pass today, but we also need for there not to be an election in the summer, which is an important point to make as well. My hope would be that if the best thing doesn't happen, which is to not have an election, we might at least see a future procedure and House affairs committee take seriously the intention of this committee to study this issue. However, in the course of the study as it unfolds, we're going to be hearing, for sure, a lot about electoral reform, but I would expect that we are going to hear a lot about citizens' assemblies because the motion is very much about how you would proceed with a citizens' assembly in order to tackle this issue. It would be an alternative to the attempt in the last Parliament that was very much a parliamentary-led Parliament that didn't get the outcome that I know many people who would like to see electoral reform in Canada want.

In the course of that, the committee is going to hear a lot about citizens' assemblies in general, as well as citizens' assemblies for the purpose of electoral reform, having a mandate to file that information in a separate report and share it with Parliament so that it isn't lost. It often happens that, by the end of a study, committee members are something like subject experts, although maybe not to the degree of those who do it for a living. Certainly, one of the great privileges of this job is the opportunity to broaden and deepen our understanding of a range of issues that come before us in our duties as members of Parliament, and members who are part of this study at the end of it will know a lot more than they already do.

Not all of us have done these kinds of citizen engagement processes for a living in the way that Mr. Turnbull has, so at the end of that, we'll probably have some more general reflections on how citizens' assemblies might be able to be used. It's value added for Canadians if we can compile that information and some of those reflections and submit them formally to the House for the government's consideration and the consideration of Canadians at large who are thinking about how government can make better policy in a way that's more citizen-led.

I think this is information that the committee is going to accumulate in the course of its study in any event, and having a way to codify that and make it useful for more people is a better way to proceed. That's why I'm happy to support this amendment.

The other thing I appreciate about this amendment is that it leaves intact all of the important components about the electoral reform piece, and it allows for a detailed report to be submitted on that particular issue, which I know is very important to all of those of us in Canada who really do want to see a different voting system implemented and would appreciate some straightforward recommendations from this committee on that matter specifically.

Thank you.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Blaikie.

Dr. Duncan.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Good morning, dear colleagues.

Madam Chair, happy birthday, and we wish you a lovely day and a good year.

I just want to say that I support what Mr. Blaikie has brought forward, and I also support this amendment. I think all of us would agree that politics is about staying in touch with people and about their having their say in their community.

In our community, we work hard to reach out to the community to hear their views, and to hear their ideas. In Etobicoke North, I have had this huge council from day one, and we want to make sure that our association is representative of our wonderful community. I believe the whole point of politics is for people to get involved and to help build a better country.

If we look at some of the data internationally, such as this data from the Pew Research Center, an average of 64% of people across

34 countries do not believe that elected officials really care about what citizens think. We should be disturbed by that.

One solution is to include more deliberation within our democracy, and I think citizen assemblies are an increasingly popular way of doing so. Depending on where they are in the world, they are groups of about 100 people broadly representative of the population, meeting over several weeks or months to debate topics.

I think it's important to broaden it out, and I know Mr. Blaikie has said he is supportive of Mr. Turnbull's amendment. I think it's important to broaden it out too. In the past 10 years, the OECD has shown a real increase in citizen *[Technical difficulty—Editor]* undertaking such a study we can look at how effective they are, where they've been implemented, what the guiding principles are, as well as membership and how members are chosen, how they operate, and whether there's a secretariat. I think there are a lot of questions we could be asking.

I think the question will not be whether deliberative democracy becomes a more intrinsic part of our democratic traditions but rather when and how, so I am strongly supportive of the amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Duncan.

Mr. Therrien.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: I will be very brief.

I don't know whether the interpreters will be able to get this right, but here's a challenge for them. My mom always used to say, "don't bite off more than you can chew."

I was convinced that the purpose of Mr. Blaikie's motion was to further study the electoral process as a whole. Mr. Turnbull's amendment would expand the study to democratic practices within the parliamentary process.

However, I believe that we should limit ourselves to the electoral process. People are asking themselves questions, and we should be too. We've heard people talk about the need to change the electoral system to proportional representation, because some parties are over-represented, and others under-represented.

I don't have the same background as Mr. Turnbull and I am not an expert on the matter. I am but a mere economist. However, my constituents often talk to me about the need to adopt proportional representation. Doing so would allow parties that are disadvantaged by the current electoral system to be better represented and better equipped to speak on behalf of people, who deserve it.

I will stop here. I don't believe that Mr. Turnbull's amendment would be beneficial for us because it weakens the premise of the main motion. Therefore, I hope that this amendment will be defeated.

• (1210)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Therrien.

Ms. Petitpas Taylor.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will be brief in my comments because much has already been said.

First and foremost, I want to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Blaikie for presenting his original motion, and also to thank Mr. Turnbull for his amendments to the motion that he has brought forward today. I think there's a lot of value to both of those.

It's really important that we have this conversation today. It's not at all a filibuster; I just think it's important to share our points of view.

As Mr. Therrien indicated, by no means am I an expert in this matter, like our friend and colleague Mr. Turnbull, but I do certainly believe that having a broader reflection on citizens' assemblies could certainly be beneficial to all of us.

As indicated as well, we certainly know that across the world, citizens' assemblies have been exploding in different countries. There has been a lot of work that's been done in this area.

Just last night during our late-night votes, I was able to do a bit of research as I had a bit of time on my hands. I came across a report from the OECD, which they did in 2020. The report is "Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions—Catching the Deliberative Wave".

The OECD project brought together an iron-clad team of practitioners, designers, academics, researchers, civil servants, and the list goes on, to examine cases where citizens' assemblies have been used across the world for different topics. For me, when I think of citizens' assemblies, I always think about matters related to electoral reform, but when I looked at that report, there were a number of different studies that were done.

Again, this report looked at why we should use citizens' assemblies and how we should use them. There were three things that really struck me. First and foremost, the experts recommended that they should be focusing on value-driven dilemmas, on policy issues where there's no clear right or wrong. The goal is to find the common ground. To me, it made sense when I read that. Another was they should focus on complex problems that require trade-offs. Often, we need to do that. Finally, they should focus on long-term issues that go beyond electoral cycles. We know those are challenging issues that are dealt with regularly.

When I look at all of that, I'm thinking we should really be looking at expanding this study and reflecting on how we could use citizens' assemblies.

Finally, there are a few examples. I'm not going to get into all of this because time is of the essence here.

In Ireland they looked at some really difficult issues, like the issue of access to abortion and climate change to name [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. In France they looked at the whole issue of climate change. We know that's a huge issue that we have to deal with. We have to find some common ground there as well. In Germany they looked at the whole issue of their democratic process. In

the U.K. they looked at the issue of meeting their net-zero emission targets by 2050.

Again, I think there's a lot we could learn by doing this study.

I know that my friend and colleague Mr. Turnbull talked about terms of references and what we could look at with respect to this study. We talked about participants: how we are going to recruit them, how we are going to select them. A lot of work needs to be done with respect to that.

Another part that we didn't really discuss was the learning phase. If we have a citizens' advisory committee that's put together, we're all coming at this with very basic knowledge, although perhaps some have a lot of knowledge. I look at the whole issue of electoral reform three years ago. I think we were all [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] ways that we could vote. I can certainly imagine what PROC committee members had to go through: using common language, asking what it meant, providing definitions, so we're at least using the same lingo.

I think a lot of work could be done with respect to this study. Again, I support MP Blaikie, but I think that with respect to MP Turnbull's amendment, we could have an even greater study.

I'll leave my comments there. Thank you.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you so much, Ms. Petitpas Taylor.

I bumped into somebody who was part of the Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, although I think we did have some at committee as well. I randomly bumped into him. That was a very interesting conversation. Even though things didn't go somewhere, he was still very excited about what he was able to contribute in participating in that process.

Mr. Nater.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to offer a few brief comments on this amendment.

Let's just imagine for a second that there were a body where people from across the country were brought together into one place on a regular basis, perhaps 338 of them, and who were somehow representative of the people in those geographic regions, and that somehow they were able to be brought together in some magical place, in some magical building. We could call it the "House of Commons", or something like that.

My goodness, this amendment makes me want to pull my hair out. My goodness, if we want to start fixing our own house, let's start with the House of Commons itself, rather than creating new bodies external to the representative house to which we were all democratically elected.

First of all, if the Liberals are truly wanting to see greater debate and discussions of the different issues that come before us as parliamentarians, let's allow Kevin Lamoureux to sit down from time to time and have other parliamentarians speak in the House of Commons.

I think I speak for many [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] you know. It's almost laughable. We only see Kevin Lamoureux jumping up and speaking in the House of Commons, now closely rivaled perhaps by Mark Gerretsen, who is the only Liberal actually in the House of Commons, whether the Liberals are participating or not. Let's start with that.

The House of Commons is a duly-elected representative house of the people. Why don't we look at improving debate in the House of Commons on the issues that matter to Canadians across the country?

This debate on a citizens' assembly for every issue that might come forward is a classic—I'll be blunt—Liberal technique of “Let's talk everything out. Let's have a great opportunity to talk, talk, talk”.

Some of that discussion reminds me of undergraduate seminar courses where people have read one chapter of a poli-sci textbook, and then assumed they were experts on XYZ. That's exactly how this debate sounds like and is unfolding right now: “Let's take this one idea we read about in a poli-sci textbook, and let's run with it for every issue we can think about.”

Citizens' assemblies serve a role. They serve a role when we're discussing complex issues related to electoral reform when it's a time-limited process and designed to come to an end point on very specific issues. It would be a dereliction of our duty as parliamentarians if we start shuffling off every issue elsewhere.

We have parliamentary committees to review issues. We have the House of Commons to review issues. We have the Senate, for goodness' sake, that can review issues such as this. For us to go down this rabbit hole of amending this motion to include a discussion on citizens' assemblies for these vast variety of issues, I see it as nothing more than adding issues to just further the discussion and talk out the clock on this particular issue.

Let me blunt. I'm voting against this amendment. This is just nonsense, and I apologize if I'm offending anyone because I'm telling the truth here. This is just nonsense. Let's get the House of Commons in order before we start delegating our responsibilities elsewhere.

If there's a problem with how we operate as a legislative branch of government, let's fix it, rather than create something else.

I'll be voting against the amendment when it comes to a vote.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1220)

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull, you are next.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Let me just say thank you to Mr. Nater for expressing his point of view, which I respectfully and strongly disagree with, but that's okay. That's what it's all about, being allow to disagree.

From my perspective, I want to speak very briefly to Mr. Therrien's points, which I thought were good and well taken.

From my perspective, I don't think this will unnecessarily broaden the scope of the study. I think it's a way to get more value out of the same process. It's an added layer of reflection in the study from a process point of view while we're thinking through how to structure a national citizens' assembly for tackling the one particularly complex, prickly issue of electoral reform, which we know is difficult. Why not also extract the additional value from that work so that we get a reflection on how to design those processes for other types of systemic issues? That's not to say that we're going to go to the same length of study with all of those other issues, so respectfully to Mr. Nater, I don't think it's about just applying it to every issue. We may even reflect under what conditions an issue is the right type of one to apply a citizens assembly to. We may even think about how we design a national citizens' assembly in a different way and ask ourselves slightly different questions depending on what issue we focus on.

I will also note to Mr. Nater, who I think is the representative for Perth—Wellington, if I'm not mistaken.... I've undertaken four of these processes—not citizens' assemblies—in his riding in my previous work on a poverty reduction strategy with the local health unit that took a collective impact approach. We did work on sustainable food systems in his community as well and wrote a report that included hundreds of stakeholders from across Perth and Huron counties on diversity and inclusion in rural communities.

What I would say is that this work is already going on. How do we get the most value out of connecting our parliament to some of these processes? I don't think it's an attempt to filibuster, duplicate, unnecessarily broaden, waste time or talk out the clock. Any of that is, I'm sorry, nonsense. This is an authentic attempt to get a little bit more value out of the reflections that we're going to undertake within, I think, an important piece of work that is sitting before this committee right now. That's the attempt; that's the intent with which I brought this amendment forward, so I just want to stand up for that and let you know that that's my perspective.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Vecchio, you are the final speaker on the list.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes, and thanks very much.

Truly, this is where I want to come back to the clerk, because I recognize that we're talking about two very distinct things.

When we're talking about electoral reform and what that looks like using a citizens' assembly, that is, when we want to look at where we end at the end of the day, that is one track.

The other track is what we're talking about by doing, truly, an outreach. It's a variety of other options that we have to do here as well.

I guess for me, I know that we will table reports. A lot of times, we'll table a committee report followed by supplementary and dissenting reports. Maybe the clerk can share with me on this, and then I will take the floor back. I look at these two items as very separate. What historically has been done when a committee does one study but has two reports? To me, it just seems like we're going to be calling witnesses in, and if this is what the government wants, we're going to be really focusing on that report. We'll ensure that all of the witnesses are for that report.

I guess my thing is that I feel right now that we're trying to split hairs here. Why would we not focus and put all of our intentions into something that is important to Mr. Blaikie and then water down the rest? Why would there not be two separate studies, rather than two separate reports on one study? I just want to see, historically, if that has been done.

• (1225)

The Chair: Sure. The clerk and I did discuss this a little while ago, trying to figure out the answers to these exact questions. Maybe, Mr. Vaive, you can elaborate on that.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Justin Vaive): Yes, course, Madam Chair.

To Ms. Vecchio's specific question about the number of reports, it does happen, and does happen frequently enough that a committee will provide more than one report on the same study. Sometimes that takes the form of an interim report followed by a final report, or sometimes it's a report part 1, and that same report part 2. That has happened in the past, especially on, for example, a very big study where perhaps the committee might want to segment out the work that it's doing and focus on one segment in a specific report and then a second segment or other segments in a different report. So that does occur.

Now, to the more general point that you raised just now and also a little earlier in the debate regarding scope and mandate, the mandate of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is found in Standing Order 108(3)(a). The specific provision within that mandate for PROC that makes Mr. Blaikie's entire motion in order is in subparagraph 108(3)(a)(vi) of that, which talks about the review of and report on all matters relating to the election of members to the House of Commons.

Now, on the amendment that Mr. Turnbull is bringing forward, my own personal interpretation—and this would be sort of my own personal advice that I would give to the chair or to any member of the committee—is that, in and of itself, as a stand-alone item it wouldn't fall within the mandate. If you were just talking about designing a citizenship engagement platform, that wouldn't fall within the mandate.

My understanding based on the discussion that the members had today is that it's very much a part 2 to the bigger issue of Mr. Blaikie's amendment, which is to say let's look at creating a citizen assembly on electoral reform and then basically Mr. Turnbull's amendment comes in and kind of says let's focus as well on the mechanics of how that citizen assembly can be built in order to fulfill the broader mandate of looking at electoral reform.

He has also added the other aspect of it, which is that it might also have applicability for issues other than electoral reform.

So the procedural advice that I would give—and by no means does this in any way bind the chair or the committee—would be that it would fall within the mandate of the committee because there is still that link to electoral reform, which is all about methods of electing members of Parliament to the House of Commons, which is in the mandate of the committee.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That's awesome. Thank you very much. I think those are some of my thoughts as well, exactly what you are talking about. I really appreciate your looking at this as these two issues and recognizing that, yes, it would not fall in the scope because it truly is outside the scope of it but by amending a motion we can throw this in here.

I guess from this I would almost be wondering—I'm not putting forward a subamendment or anything like this—when we were doing even the reports on part 1 and part 2 of any of the studies we have done, it was still on a clear point and direction on when we're doing a study on electoral reform [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] mandate. So is there a way we could separate these two reports so there would be a part A and a part B? Would that also include all the witnesses in part A and part B?

Our focus is supposed to be on one thing, which would be the electoral reform effort going back to the original motion. We could write something specifically on that electoral reform. Should we not have, perhaps, milestones saying that once this is done then we can take all the information that we have received when it comes to a citizens assembly, and then if we need additional witnesses...? Really, I think the witnesses we call should be electoral experts. When we're getting into what Mr. Turnbull talked about, I believe that, yes, this is a huge study that should... Like the poverty reduction study that we did in HUMA, this is exactly how this study would end up. If the NDP would like to actually have results and have an election look different and have any of these things, I think this just makes it so [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] done. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] It was so large that it got lost and a year and a half of work was never even noticed, which was really quite astounding.

Those are some of my concerns. How are we going to separate this and ensure that we're getting what we want with the initial motion that Mr. Blaikie has put forward, and how are we going to ensure that this is being done to the best of our abilities as well?

I'll leave the floor there. I cannot support this whatsoever. I just personally feel that it is a great way of watering down something so that they don't have to vote "no" against this and so that they can change the narrative when we go into part 2. That's how I personally see it. I guess the last eight months have made me extremely skeptical regarding these amendments that have been put forward, just because I truly would like to know the intention.

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Vecchio.

How the study is formulated and what witnesses are called is all stuff we can.... I understand the concern you would have, but it would all have to go through a process for further study when we do get to it after today.

We could have the subcommittee sit down and look at that. Generally, the subcommittee comes back with a consensus on these things. We have one member from each party on that, so I think those things can be mitigated. Those worries have to go through the committee. It has to be decided by the committee members as to how far one goes on witnesses and even timelines. We could end up having a shorter timeline given to this, if we choose.

The committee does have control past passing this motion. It doesn't mean that the committee loses all control. The committee would still be in control of how they want to see the study conducted. You would obviously have a say in all of that.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Chair, with all due respect, the thing is that we tabled a report just last Friday with not a single key witness that we had requested.

I thought more would come out of the procedure and House affairs committee because, with my former boss who was the chair, I saw some great work being done for years. To you, Ruby, it's no slight. I think you're doing a great job as the committee chair on this, but I also see the political games that are being used. I am looking at this just feeling like I'm in round two of the last few months. I think, seriously, whether we going to get something done or whether this all on where people's narratives want to go. That's just my concern.

As of tomorrow, we're actually going to be rising in the House. We actually do not have the ability to have a procedure and House affairs committee this summer because the government will not sit down and talk about what we will do if we want to have something—we have talked about this—and if we need to have a committee.

Let's say that something does happen and there needs to be a committee meeting. We do not have the ability to do that because we have not sat there. After tomorrow we would no longer have the extension of this where we can do hybrid meetings.

I look at all of these things and I think [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. We know that we've had goodbyes and farewells from a variety of MPs on all party sides and all of this type of stuff. I just feel like it's just a political charade right now. Although I would love to come back here and start doing our work in September, I do not feel that we're going to. I feel like today has become a big charade to say that this is what we're going to do.

Those are just some of my concerns. If I really felt that the seriousness of Daniel's motion was key.... Maybe this should be more Daniel's concern. The fact that it's all watered down should be his concern rather than mine, but I just think that we're not going to get anything out of this. We're not going to have the Prime Minister come here. We're not going to have anything because when this government decides it's going to put its foot down and not let a study finish, that's what it does.

The defence committee closed yesterday after months of a study. Do you know why? It was because they didn't want the report to come out.

I look at all of these different things that have happened in this last few months and I'll be honest, I am very disenfranchised with the fact that I think we could do good work. I even look at the motion where I think, Daniel, that I want to know a little bit more about this. I'm not saying I'm a hundred per cent for it, but I am saying is that I'm watching this government water down this motion so that it takes a totally different turn. It's just like the prorogation report and everything else we've done on committee.

Those are my concerns. I'll leave it there.

• (1235)

The Chair: Well, I am pleased to see you're very committed to undertake this electoral reform study. It's good to see that commitment. I'm sure we'll see that commitment from all of the members.

We'll hear from Mr. Blaikie and then go to a vote.

Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I guess I'd just like to have the opportunity to respond to some of the debate on the main motion.

First of all, I understand the skepticism about Liberal governments very well, having watched the process unfold in the last Parliament, but the question for people who sincerely want to see voting reform is this: How do we keep the conversation alive, how do we keep it going and how do we reach out to people who obviously have very different political interests and different points of view, in order to try to keep pushing this process forward until it succeeds?

As somebody who is personally very committed to seeing Canada adopt a different electoral system than the first-past-the-post system that we have, which I don't think is serving the country well, I respect that there are different points of view on that, but my point of view is that this voting system is not serving the country well and I would like to see it change. That means continuing to have conversations in Parliament, first of all, and in civil society generally and, hopefully, with some new mechanisms in order to bring more people on board to help understand some of the shortcomings of the current system we have and some of the real potential and opportunities that exist in other systems.

We had a process last Parliament. It didn't work. From the point of view of people who want to see genuine voting reform in Canada, it didn't work, so the question is, instead of just trying to do the same thing over again, how do we try to get to somewhere different?

I note that this motion is largely untouched, except for the amendment that we passed for the Conservatives, which just draws attention to the fact that talking about whether or not to have a referendum is an important component of any conversation about electoral reform. It still requires a separate report on the issue of electoral reform.

That report will be mandated to include terms of reference, what the composition of an assembly should look like, a timeline for completion, public reporting requirements for the assembly and speaking to the question of resources for the assembly, including how to support citizen engagement and not just necessarily the people who are in the assembly itself. It gives the committee latitude to ask if there's something left out in the course of their study, and when they hear from experts [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to that report. It has to be filed separately. Even if the committee decides that it's not worth going forward with a national citizens' assembly, at least a report is still required so that there's a determinate end to that study and we know definitively what the opinion of the committee is after having looked at that.

All of that stays the same. All of that is intact. That's a process that I would like to see happen. To then say in addition to that, okay, well let's also take some of the learnings that has happened in the course of that study about how citizen assemblies may or may not be used.... I take some of Mr. Nater's point. I'm certainly an advocate for parliamentary reform. Just this morning, I tabled a private member's bill to try to curtail some of the immense prerogative that the Prime Minister has around prorogation. I have a motion on the Order Paper around the dissolution of Parliament as well, and I'm on this committee in part because of my own interest in all things having to do with parliamentary process.

It may be that the committee says there's no value in citizens' assemblies. I would be surprised at that because, as Ms. Petitpas Taylor pointed out earlier, they're being used to great effect in other places, and I don't think that we as elected people.... Simply because we're elected doesn't mean that there aren't other ways of expressing the voice of Canadian citizens in the policy-making process. We are one. We are an important one. Obviously, Parliament is very important, but it doesn't always work very well. I think that anyone who is being honest can see—in fact, there's some evidence of it even in today's meeting—that partisan interests can derail otherwise good policy discussion. We've certainly seen that in this Parliament in all sorts of ways. I'll spare you all the examples.

The question isn't whether we can agree on everything all the time and everybody is going to sing *Kumbaya* and love each other at the end of the meeting. The question is, can we leave this meeting having taken a concrete step forward towards trying to get back on track in a process that, yes, some may stall and delay? Although I hope not: I hope everybody is acting in good faith. But if I just assume that everybody is acting in bad faith all the time, we won't make any progress at all either.

• (1240)

So, I'm glad to see that we were able to incorporate an amendment from the Conservative Party into this motion. I'm glad for the proposal by Mr. Turnbull, and I'm happy to support it. At the end of it, we will have an NDP motion with a Conservative amendment and a Liberal amendment pass that allows us to restart a process that was broken in the last Parliament when the government rejected all of the findings, to try and get us back on track towards getting to where we can get out of the first-past-the-post system, a system that—as I said last meeting—is, I think, in no small part responsible for all of the speculation around an election. If the Prime Minister does want an election this summer—and there are a lot of signs that suggest that he does, although I think he would be wrong to call one—it will be because the first-past-the-post system promises him a majority in these circumstances with about 40% in the polls instead of 35%. If that is incentivizing a prime minister to call an election during a pandemic, something is clearly broken, and it's clearly not serving the interests of Canadians well.

There is need for further discussion on that, and there are lessons out of this Parliament and out of the pandemic for how we vote, how we select parliaments and, indeed, how we select governments.

I'm pleased with today's conversation. I want to thank everybody. Despite a little bit of needling, which is par for the course here in Parliament, I think that, overall, we've had a very productive conversation. The motion, ultimately, will be better for it, and I hope that Canadians agree. I hope that Canadians who want to see a change in the voting system will agree. I think that if all parties engage in good faith in the process and the study that's laid out in this motion, we can hope to make some progress. We'll only know at the end of that process whether people engaged in good faith, and Canadians will be able to evaluate for themselves who they think best represented their interest in changing the voting system. However, we'll leave that decision to Canadians. The decision before us today is to embark on this study, and I look forward to making that decision.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Blaikie. You're always very eloquent and, yes, that's a very positive outlook to have. It is true. All parties have, to some degree, contributed, so maybe we can move to a vote now.

Mr. Clerk, can you help us with the vote on the amendment?

The Clerk: Madam Chair, the question is on Mr. Turnbull's amendment.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

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

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I'm so sorry. I just have a quick emergency. Give me one second. Can you come back to me? My son just called. I have quick emergency—one second.

The Clerk: We'll come back to you.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Congratulations, the motion passes.

Ms. Petitpas Taylor, you have your hand up.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Karen, please, never apologize. It's family first. When our kids need us, they need us. Anyway, I just needed to say that.

Madam Chair, I would like to at this point move a motion from the floor, perhaps with a bit of a preamble.

Last week, when we had Ms. Qaqqaq appear before the committee, she made some compelling arguments with respect to indigenous languages being included in the ballots. After much reflection of those conversations that we had, and listening attentively, I've spoken to my Liberal colleagues. We all agree with respect to the motion that we want to bring forward.

If you will allow me, I will take a moment to read the motion:

That, pursuant to its mandate to examine issues related to Elections Canada under Standing Order 108(3)(a)(vi), the committee undertake a study of the measures necessary to ensure that the Chief Electoral Officer is empowered to require that ballots for electoral districts be prepared and printed in the Indigenous language or languages of electors, using the appropriate writing systems for each language, including syllabics if applicable, in addition to both official languages;

That this study include meaningful consultation with Indigenous language speakers and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis leaders across Canada;

That this study include consideration of the status Indigenous languages and the rights of Indigenous language speakers across the country;

That the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House;

That, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the Government table a comprehensive response to this report; and

That the Committee resolve to undertake this study as its next order of business.

That is the formal motion, Madam Chair. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] today.

That will be forwarded to all members in both official languages.

Again, I want to stress that Madam Qaqqaq's comments that she made last week really made me reflect a lot, and I think made many of our committee members reflect. I think it's truly imperative that we take on this study and that we take it on as soon as possible.

Over the course of the weekend, I had a chance to speak to one of my brothers, who works in Iqaluit, and Cape Dorset for a number of years. We were speaking about this matter that came before the committee. He indicated to me that if we want to increase voter participation in these territories, it's really, really important that we do our part.

I know that last week we ruled it out of the scope of our study, but I think moving forward, it's really important to look at this matter seriously, in hopes that for the next election, or whenever we can, we'll be able to have their languages on the same ballots.

Those are my comments. Thank you.

• (1245)

The Chair: Ms. Petitpas Taylor, thank you for that.

I myself did not want to rule that out of order, but procedurally, after advice and after looking at what Bill C-19 entailed...it felt like it was one of those technical issues that I wish wasn't really a technical issue.

I'm glad you brought this forward, because I'm committed to this too. Whether we move forward as this committee or in another committee later on, it's figuring out how to support indigenous languages on the ballot in the future, and as quickly as possible.

We'll hear from a few people who wish to speak to this.

Mr. Nater is up first.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think I saw the motion just come through to my email. That was going to be my first question.

Again, my only comment about this is that we're doing another study to look into this. We need to remind the current government that they are the government. They've been the government for nearly six years. They've actually proposed three bills on electoral reform. One in the previous Parliament was just left unmoved and unloved on the Order Paper and never proceeded past second reading.

Here comes the government once again, from the deputy whip, wanting to have a study to look into this, to propose something to happen at some point in the future, knowing full well that today is the final committee meeting of this sitting of Parliament. We cannot meet over the summer, because the government has not come forward with any proposals for hybrid meetings during the summer, so the earliest this could be undertaken is at some point in September, when we are all back in person in Ottawa. There is no other option right now, other than 338 of us returning to Ottawa on September 20, when we know the Prime Minister is seriously thinking about, and all the measures point to the fact he's going to take a trip over to the Supreme Court to ask the administrator to dissolve Parliament at some point this summer to cause an election. None of this is going to be happening or changed prior to an election happening. There is speculation they will appoint a Governor General, so he may not have to go to the administrator, but to the Governor General.

Again, I don't have any qualms with the actual motion. Obviously, it's something we're going to support, but it's just so typical of what we're seeing right now: talk and no action. If the government wanted to go forward with this, they could bring forward legislation. They could bring forward an angle to actually make this happen, rather than asking this committee to undertake a study.

Obviously, I suspect Liberal members of this committee got a bit of a push-back on social media regarding that last meeting. That's the joy of being a parliamentarian, taking that backlash. Now they're going forward with something to try to calm those concerns.

The Liberals are the government. You have the legislative powers at your disposal. You have the entire apparatus of government at your disposal. You have the Privy Council Office. You have the entire mechanisms of government to do something, and here we have a proposal to move forward with another study.

Those are my comments. I will leave it there, Madam Chair.

I'm very snarky today, so I do apologize for that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1250)

The Chair: I think you have woken up on the wrong side of the bed today or something. I'm glad you like the study, though. Perhaps you will vote in favour of it. We'll see.

I understand what you're saying. We are sitting here on our last day of this committee and discussing a whole lot of big issues. Electoral reform is a big issue, and so is this. Absolutely, the government can propose legislation. Perhaps we can show them the right path. Maybe we could have a very short study on this, what languages should be included, what it would look like. It doesn't have to be a lengthy one. We might come back in September. We might even have the possibility of being able to have extra meetings. I don't know that right now.

All we can do is set a path forward in case we do come back in September. We could start that or we could start the electoral reform one right off the bat. Whatever it is, we'll be set and ready.

Perhaps some of the members who are on this committee, if we don't come back and committees are reshuffled or whatnot, will still be here.

Mr. Nater, you've been on this committee from time to time in the past Parliament as well, and others have, too, so you never know, and they'll be able to bring this forward.

I don't think it's a complete waste, but it's up to you guys, really.

I see Dr. Duncan and Mr. Calkins. We have quite a few hands up. We have a hard stop at 1 p.m., so maybe we can all keep it to one minute each.

I apologize. I shouldn't have said anything and taken up time.

Dr. Duncan.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank my colleague for bringing this forward. I will keep my remarks very short and I hope we will get to a vote.

I think it's incumbent upon us to allow people to vote in their language. I would hope with all the pandemic planning that has gone on for an election, there is the possibility a study could be done quickly, and perhaps people will be able to vote in their language.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Duncan.

Mr. Calkins, you have the floor.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you, Chair.

Look, I don't have a problem, and I'm not impugning the motives of the mover of the motion. I don't have a problem at all with the procedure and House affairs committee studying barriers keeping people from being able to vote. This is something that should be of concern at all times to members of Parliament, particularly to those members who are regular members of this committee.

The wording of the motion already presumes that the issue is as prevalent as has been stated by an individual colleague in the House of Commons, and the solution is also presumed in the text of the motion, which basically says that the problem is real and that the solution is to do it this way. If that's the case, then I don't know what we're going to study it for.

I'm from a riding and represent a riding that's largely unilingual, even though there are many people in the riding who do speak different languages, but most everybody I know who is a Canadian citizen and eligible to vote gets along just fine in one of the two official languages. I know, even here in the province of Alberta, that there are polls, and we used to ask these questions during the census—and I'm pretty sure we still do—about what languages people operate in. We would know about different regions of the country. Elections Canada would have access to information on different regions of the country and what primary languages are being used in a particular polling station. It wouldn't matter if it were one of our traditional aboriginal languages, whether it's a language that's being used in the north by Inuit, whether it's a language being used in Vancouver by those speaking Cantonese or Mandarin or those in a neighbourhood in Toronto who would be speaking a dialect from South Asia.

The notion of being able to print our ballots in more than the two official languages presumes that there's no alternative way to communicate to prospective voters what's on the ballot in a language that they can relate to. That would be something maybe as simple as having an interpretive sign placed inside the voting box in the particular language that cross-references with the ballot, for example, but that's not what's going to be discussed in the terms of this motion, because the motion already presumes what the solution is.

I would be much more satisfied, Madam Chair, if the motion were not as descriptive on what the solution is and more descriptive on what the problem might be. Then the mover of the motion would find that they would get much more support from this member of Parliament.

• (1255)

The Chair: I see your point of view.

Go ahead, Ms. Vecchio.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you very much.

I would like to put forward an amendment to delete the last two lines of this motion. Specifically, I'm looking at the timeline in which we're going to be pre-empting this study rather than doing the NDP study that was put forward.

I believe this is an extremely important study that we're talking about. Last week, when Ms. Qaqqaq put forward those motions, we know that, throughout the entire study, we had not heard too much specifically on what we need to do for indigenous languages. That being said, we do know that the minister could have put things like this in the bill, knowing the importance of it. Minister LeBlanc could have put something in there to make sure that this wasn't happening so that, when these amendments were put forward last week, it was not outside the scope of the bill.

Ruby, I know that was a very difficult decision for you to be in, because it's a no win, to be honest, when you look at that.

I would just say that we should not put the timeline in front. This is something that the minister could do with the support of members of Parliament, but we should be doing the work that this committee just suggested we should be doing as well. We do know that we have privilege motions still sitting on the table waiting for us. Kevin Lamoureux is sitting there waiting for us. Will Amos is sitting there waiting for us. I'm sure, by the way things are going, that we may have more by the end of the day, such as the information that came out from yesterday's health committee. We know, at the end of the day, that it, too, may be coming to us, so I'm very concerned.

I'm saying, "Minister, please do your job so that PROC can do our jobs". Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much.

I'm quite supportive of the intent of the motion. It's consistent with the amendment that we presented to Bill C-19. Of course, I do want to echo comments that have been made already. I mean, it would be nice to see this coming directly from government. I would rather study it in the context of a bill. I think there is enough knowledge out there. Indigenous peoples have been here and speaking their languages long before Canada was an entity. It's not a mystery that they're here. It's not a mystery that they have their own languages. I think we're finally coming to a place as a country where we're willing to acknowledge that instead of trying to erase that reality.

It's really just a question of a concrete proposal for legislative change. We tried to make that change when it came to Bill C-19, because it appeared to be a way to do it. We know that there will already be a lot of barriers to voting as a result of the pandemic.

With the caveat that I really would like to see the government come forward with something.... If we're not going to be studying this until the fall anyway, that's a lot of time for the government to draft a bill and bring it forward in the fall. That would be [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to a simple committee study that doesn't have the ability to then go ahead and enact, in legislation, whatever the conclusions of our study might be.

I'm certainly prepared to support this study, but I would really like to see some leadership from the government in getting it going so that at the end of the study we're changing the law instead of recommending to government that they go away, take more time to figure out how they might draft an amendment, and then have to study it all over again.

• (1300)

The Chair: Absolutely. That's fair too, but we can only do what we can do here. Hopefully, this pushes that ball forward a little bit.

As I mentioned, this committee previously had undertaken to have interpretation of indigenous languages in the House of Commons, and we were able to have that implemented in the House. I see that as a big success, or a success—a step forward, at least. Hopefully, we can achieve something else that we can be proud of.

Monsieur Therrien.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: It's late. I supported what Ms. Qaqqaq proposed to us last week. Despite the fact that the chair did her job and told us that it was out of order, I nevertheless stressed how important it was to agree with this request.

Quebec is a nation of francophones, and we have been in a precarious position since 1763. You know Quebec's history. We are truly attentive to all peoples when they want to assert themselves and impose and preserve their language. As a gesture of solidarity, given what we are experiencing in Quebec, I will support any measure to promote and protect indigenous languages.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Nater, we'll quickly hear from you [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] our speakers list.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Very briefly, through you and through Ms. Petitpas Taylor, I would like to thank Kevin Collins, legislative assistant to the president of the Privy Council, for drafting this motion. If we look at the metadata of the document that was sent out, it was drafted by the minister's office, which shows the.... I don't even know what word I want to use. Again, the minister's office is drafting a motion to send to a committee to undertake a study on this. The president of the Privy Council, the individual responsible for the Elections Act, responsible for the Privy Council Office, responsible for this, is putting it through to a committee to do a study on this.

That was the only comment I wanted to make. It was just to express my concern about that.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have about a minute. I think we could do the two votes.

We have Ms. Vecchio's amendment. She would like to remove the last two bullets, essentially, or the last two sentences—reporting back to the House, a comprehensive report, and then also a timeline, I guess.

• (1305)

Let's have a vote on that amendment and then on the main motion.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

The Chair: Okay, we'll have a vote on the main motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: That brings today's meeting to an end. I hope you all have a fabulous next couple of months with your constituents doing things in your community.

Hopefully we will see each other back, who knows, maybe sooner rather than later. I don't know exactly when that will be, but hopefully in September, at least.

I wish you all very well.

The meeting is adjourned.

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