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Thursday, December 16, 2021

Chair: Mr. Kody Blois



Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

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• (1525)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Benoit Jolicoeur): Honourable members of the committee, I now see a quorum.

[Translation]

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

[English]

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

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

I am now ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): I nominate Kody Blois for chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Barlow that Mr. Blois be elected chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Blois duly elected chair of the committee.

Congratulations.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair (Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.)): It's good to see everyone online. Thank you very much to all members of the committee.

I just want to take this opportunity before we get started. I know that we want to move relatively quickly today.

To all folks on the committee, what I found in my last two years was that we were very collaborative. The folks who sit around this table care about farmers. We care about those ranchers, producers and people who are literally putting food on our tables.

My hope, in sitting in this role, is that we as a committee can continue to do that work. I know that we will all bring our own individual perspectives and our policy positions from our respective parties, but I hope we can do so in a way that is respectful and try

to advance the interests of farmers. Let's always have that at the heart of our discussions.

[Translation]

My French is not perfect, but I will try to speak in both official languages when Mr. Lehoux, Mr. Drouin and Mr. Perron are present.

[English]

If the committee is in agreement, I invite the clerk to proceed with the election of the vice-chairs.

Seeing general agreement, Mr. Clerk, if you could move forward with that, it would be lovely.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

Go ahead, Mr. Epp.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Clerk, I nominate John Barlow.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Epp that Mr. Barlow be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

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

Congratulations.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1530)

[Translation]

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

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

Mr. Drouin, go ahead.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): I nominate Yves Perron.

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

Are there any further motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee members to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

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

[*English*]

The Chair: All right, everyone.

Mr. MacGregor, welcome. It's great to see you here.

To all of our folks, welcome to the first meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Mr. Steinley, I'll go over to you.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): I would like to move for unanimous consent that we proceed through the bells.

The Chair: Are there any comments on that?

We're happy to continue to move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Steinley.

As we know, today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending by Zoom, and they're also here physically in this room.

Regarding the speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to try to maintain a speaking order by watching the screens and watching all of you here in the room. Please just raise your hand on the screen.

I see Mr. Drouin.

If you'd like to intervene, go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Chair, I was going to read some of these routine motions that we need for the committee operate. If you'll provide me with indulgence, and if my committee members will provide me the time, I will read those into the record. If there's no objection, I suggest that we then simply pass one motion as opposed to adopting each individual motion within the routine motions.

Does that make sense?

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, I'm happy to do that and to entertain that.

Just so I stay on the good terms with my clerk here beside me, I want to make sure that I remind folks about the COVID situation. Masks are on if you're not speaking. Thank you. I just want to follow proper COVID protocol when we're in this room.

Mr. Drouin, I think you have the floor to move forward.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Great. The first motion relates to analyst services. I move:

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

On the subcommittee on agenda and procedure, I move:

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

Regarding meeting without a quorum, I move:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence published when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four members are present, including two members of the opposition parties and two members of the government party, but when travelling outside the Parliamentary Precinct, that the meeting begin after 15 minutes, regardless of members present.

On the time for opening remarks and questioning of witnesses, I move:

That witnesses be given five minutes for their opening statement; that whenever possible, witnesses provide the committee with their opening statement 72 hours in advance; that at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated six minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows for the first round: Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois, New Democratic Party.

For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows: Conservative Party, five minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes; Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes; New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes; Conservative Party, five minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes.

Regarding document distribution, I move:

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

On working meals, I move:

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

Regarding the travel, accommodation and living expenses of witnesses, I move:

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

On access to in camera meetings, I move:

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

On transcripts of in camera meetings, I move:

That one copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee or by their staff; and that the analysts assigned to the committee also have access to the in camera transcripts.

Regarding notice of motion, I move:

That a 48-hour notice, interpreted as two nights, be required for any substantive motion to be moved in committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, provided that: (a) the notice be filed with the clerk of the committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; (b) the motion be distributed to Members and the offices of the whips of each recognized party in both official languages by the clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour; (c) notices received after the deadline hour or on non-business days be deemed to have been received during the next business day; and that when the committee is holding meetings outside the Parliamentary Precinct, no substantive motion may be moved.

On orders of reference from the House respecting bills, I move:

That in relation to orders of reference from the House respecting Bills,

(a) The clerk of the committee shall, upon the committee receiving such an order of reference, write to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee to invite those members to file with the clerk of the committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the committee consider;

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

● (1535)

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

Regarding technical tests for witnesses, I move:

That the clerk inform each witness who is to appear before the committee that the House administration support team must conduct technical tests to check the connectivity and the equipment used to ensure the best possible sound quality; and that the Chair advise the committee, at the start of each meeting, of any witness who did not perform the required technical tests.

Regarding linguistic review, I move:

That all documents submitted for committee business that do not come from a federal department, members' offices, or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau be sent for prior linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members.

That would be it, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Well done.

Folks, are we all in agreement with that? Can I seek unanimous consent?

(Motions agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Barlow.

Mr. John Barlow: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to put forward a motion for, hopefully, a brief discussion.

I have had discussions with all of the parties on this, so I don't suspect this will be a difficult discussion.

My motion reads:

That the committee hold a three-hour meeting by December 22, 2021, to hear one panel on the extreme flooding and landslides in the province of British Columbia for the first hour with the following witnesses: officials from the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food and officials from the Department of Public Safety; and one panel on the interim suspension of certification of all potatoes originating from Prince Edward Island to the United States with the following witnesses: officials from the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Premier of Prince Edward Island and the Minister of Agriculture and Land, and the P.E.I. Potato Board.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The reason I'm putting that motion forward is that these are two of the most significant issues facing Canadian agriculture at this time. We're not asking the minister to be here. It's simply the officials, so that we can get a better understanding of the impact the floods have had on B.C. agriculture and where assistance is needed.

We certainly want to see what we can do to help there and to have a better understanding of the probable longer-term consequences.

For the second one.... You were talking, Mr. Chair, about the importance of supporting our farmers. I would like a better understanding on the decision-making process that was behind this ban and certainly what the discussions were with CFIA and the USDA. Was the USDA looking to lift that ban? What are the metrics or the bar that must be met? Are we close? What is the timeline around that?

This one is important, as the chair certainly knows, because the potatoes are perishable. We have until the end of January. That is when they will have to make a very hard decision either to open this market or to start destroying product, which is heartbreaking for those farmers. That is the reason for this motion.

I certainly hope we have everyone's support to do this sometime next week. I know it's a break week, but I do see this as being quite timely and not something we can wait until the end of January or early February to discuss.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

● (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barlow.

Is there discussion?

I see Mr. Turnbull has his hand up.

Mr. Perron, would you like to speak? You had your hand up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): I will take the floor later, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Thank you and congratulations to the chair on his appointment and election.

I am very encouraged to see you up there and guiding us through this committee business.

I don't doubt the gravity of the situation with P.E.I. potatoes and the importance of the topic. I do have some concerns that I need to express based on the timelines. I think we're talking about officials. I haven't seen the motion in writing, but it sounds like we have quite a list of individuals that Mr. Barlow would like to have appear before December 22, which is pretty short notice given that today is the 16th of December. I'm not sure how realistic that is, to be honest. I want to express some concern related to that.

Also, my understanding is that our meetings are normally two hours. Why is it a three-hour meeting, why the short notice and why on December 22?

I would ask Mr. Barlow if he'd be willing to clarify this for the committee. Thank you.

The Chair: Yes, you can clarify, Mr. Turnbull.

Also, the clerk has asked me to make sure that you're moving this motion and that it's not a notice of motion. You're formally moving it.

Mr. John Barlow: Yes.

The Chair: Okay

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I believe when Mr. Barlow introduced the motion he did say it was on notice. Now my understanding is that this motion is actually being moved today. Is that right?

The Chair: My understanding from Mr. Barlow is that this was the intention, yes.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Certainly, Mr. Chair, that wasn't what Mr. Barlow said when he read the motion. He was putting it on notice. Just to clarify, it is being moved today, and that's the intention.

Okay, I appreciate that, and I hope maybe Mr. Barlow will provide some rationale for why it's the 22nd and why a three-hour meeting.

The Chair: I'm going to use my discretion.

Mr. Barlow, because there are other folks who have their hands up, perhaps you could quickly respond, and then we will go to the next folks who want to intervene.

Mr. John Barlow: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I think I was pretty clear in my discussion that this is extremely timely in that potatoes are perishable. We are not back until January 27. At that point, it's too late to have this discussion to find out what's going on.

Why is it on the 22nd? These are professional bureaucrats, and a week is plenty of time to prepare an hour presentation. The reason it is three hours instead of two hours is just to try to get two issues done in one meeting.

That is why I put the motion forward as is.

• (1545)

The Chair: On my list, I have Mr. Drouin, Ms. Taylor Roy and then Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thanks, Mr. Barlow, for that motion. Certainly we've heard the sense of urgency.

I'm just wondering. Can we give a bit of leeway? I know there is a sense of urgency but I also know that—

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, I'm sorry. We're having an issue with the English translation coming in on the French channel, and the French translation coming in on the English. Maybe you can go ahead and we'll just make sure that gets cleared up.

Okay, it's good.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Yes, Mr. Barlow, I understand the sense of urgency but putting an artificial date with no consultation.... I'd just like the opportunity to go back and see if we can make it happen.

I know we're in the midst of this crisis. I'm sure we can get a briefing at some point, but while our officials are dealing with the situation in B.C., I don't know if it's the right time to get them in front of our committee right now. I would just like to get some time to go back and see if that can happen before December 22, or if we can be a bit more reasonable and at least extend the timeline so that we can get to somewhere we can work with. It has just been dropped. We've just been made aware of this today in terms of the timeline, and on top of that we're dealing with two emergency issues.

I'm wondering if Mr. Barlow has some leeway on his motion, or is he dead set on that?

The Chair: Do you want to reply?

Mr. John Barlow: In all fairness, I did have discussions with all the parties that this was going to be a motion for a meeting next week. It didn't seem to be a problem at all when we had discussions earlier this week. I'm a bit surprised that this is all of a sudden now a concern, but I was trying to get this done before Christmas. Understanding everybody's plans and not trying to put this over into Christmas and the new year was another part of the reason for the 22nd.

Certainly I think there is some leeway. Maybe on the B.C. issue we could have some leeway on that, but with the potato issue, understanding that this is a timely situation in terms of the perishability of this product, I don't think there is a lot of leeway on this issue. Again, these are professional employees with the CFIA and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. I would hope they have the information at their fingertips to give us an update on what's going on.

The Chair: I want to go to Ms. Taylor Roy. Then I have Mr. MacGregor.

Then I'm going to have to refer to my clerk on whether it was Mr. Epp or Mr. Louis.

Ms. Taylor Roy.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and congratulations on your election. I'm, as you all know, a new member, a new member of the committee and a new member of of Parliament, and I just have a couple of questions about this notice of motion. I just received the email with the words "notice of motion". Is it customary to get the notice of motion at the meeting?

I heard you say, Mr. Barlow, that you had spoken to people in advance on this. I'm just curious as to whether I missed something or whether this had been sent out in advance. That's my first question.

Secondly, and again excuse my ignorance because I'm new, but I'm wondering what the officials from the Department of Public Safety have to do with our committee, which I understand is about agriculture and agri-food.

Thirdly, I'm just wondering about—I don't know if it's the need or the wisdom—having the premier and the minister of agriculture from Prince Edward Island come at this stage. I'm expecting that the officials from the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the potato board would have all of the pertinent information we would require as a committee on agriculture and agri-food, but once again I'm very new to this so these are all just questions that I'm wondering about in regard to process and procedure and who the committee normally calls as witnesses.

The last thing I'd like to say is that it does seem a lot to try to get a three-hour meeting by December 22. I'm wondering whether it makes sense to have these combined. These issues are quite different and quite separate and both of them, to me, seem to be very important and involved. I would appreciate your comments on that please.

• (1550)

The Chair: I'm going to go to Mr. MacGregor. Then I have on my list Mr. Lewis, Mr. Perron and Mr. Epp. We do need to be mindful of the time.

Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thanks, Chair, I will be brief.

I have just a couple of points. First of all, the clerk was unable to receive any notices of motion because the committee was not duly constructed. That's why Mr. Barlow is moving ahead with it right now.

Second of all, I've been a member of this committee now for four years. Every time we pass a motion for study we usually start with departmental officials the very next meeting. Usually if we meet on a Tuesday they appear on a Thursday. We're meeting on a Thursday now. We're asking for a meeting I think on Tuesday next week.

You'll notice, colleagues, that the motion refers to officials. We're not specifying a position. We're asking for officials. We all know that this department is large. It's staffed with very capable people who have a lot of knowledge on these subjects, and they're perfectly capable of finding people on that short notice to appear before this committee. It's a regular order of business. It's been done this way for four years. I'll just leave it at that.

Mr. Chair, if we can, let's just get to a vote because I think these are pressing issues.

The Chair: Mr. MacGregor, I recognize that there are folks who had their hands up. I would like to go to Mr. Perron and then afterwards Mr. Louis. We do need to be mindful of the time here.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Congratulations on getting elected. I missed the beginning, but I was there.

I tend to agree with the proposal. I have no objection to it. If some members of the committee have a problem with it, perhaps it could be earlier, in early January. Perhaps that would suit them better. I don't know, I am putting the question to my friends from the Conservative Party who are proposing the motion. Otherwise, I will support it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Louis.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Part of my question was already answered. In waiting in the queue originally I did not have access to the motion online, but I do have it now. I read it as inviting the Premier of Prince Edward Island and his minister of agriculture. I just wanted to know, moving forward, what the process is, as some people are virtual and some people are in the House, when we're tabling a motion. How soon can we expect to get something as important as this? We want the time to read it as it comes in. I was looking for a little bit of clarity from you just off the top of our session here.

Thank you.

The Chair: I see two more hands. I'm going to go to Mr. Epp and then Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My own farm experienced a loss of \$400,000 due to a bankruptcy in 2016. I can speak to the personal effect, mentally, on family both in the short term and the longer, so I would call for a vote. There is a time urgency. We are aware of the mental health aspects across agriculture, all of the stresses. Can you just imagine what these folks are experiencing in P.E.I.? I would call for the vote.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Epp.

Let's go to Mr. Turnbull and then to Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I also want to weigh in here. I appreciate my colleagues' comments on this.

Mr. John Barlow: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The member did call for the vote, so I think you have to call the vote.

The Chair: My understanding from the clerk is that it's not a superseding motion to call for a vote. As long as there are individuals who want to speak to it, I have that discretion.

I want to be mindful of the time. I am going to go to Mr. Turnbull. We know that this is important. I think all members agree. As your chair, my hope is that we can find a way to be able to make this work. We've certainly heard from committee members. We've heard some of the concerns from those who have spoken already, and perhaps we can find a way to get this done.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this and express a few of the concerns that are coming up for me with regard to this.

I deeply feel and understand the need to study this, but we haven't had much notice on this. Normally, in terms of a witness list and planning a meeting as important as this, I would think we'd give a bit more lead time to not just the people in the department but our clerk and others to organize the witnesses and invite those witnesses, many of whom may not be available on such short notice with the omicron variant wreaking havoc as well as quite a few other duties that they have. I'm anticipating that this might present some logistical challenges for it to happen as early as next Tuesday.

Also, all parties normally have an opportunity to weigh in on what witnesses we'd like to have come before the committee, and we haven't had an opportunity to do that. I met with Premier King when he was on the Hill and talked to him about the potato issue, which is a concern to all of us. I showed my support, and I'm sure many other members did as well.

It's important for us to have a proper witness list, for all parties to submit those witnesses and for us to undertake a study with some real intention to the design of how we're going to undertake it and not wing it at the last minute when we weren't anticipating this. I certainly was never consulted on the fact that this motion was going to be moved today. It's something that I take very seriously, having worked on sustainable food systems and understanding supply chains and how vulnerable they are with these international trade relationships that can be so concerning.

We have an opportunity to do some deep, meaningful work here, but we can't do it without notice and proper consultation on which witnesses we'd like to see come before the committee.

• (1555)

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull, I have to interrupt you. We're getting close on time here with four minutes, and the clerk has advised me to keep it under five minutes.

The normal protocol is to ask committee members if we want to continue after the 10-minute period for voting is over. I presume that is the case, but I don't want to presume as your chair. I would move to suspend. I ask if you would want to come back after the vote, which I presume we do.

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: We'll move to suspend.

Mr. Clerk, please keep a speaking order, and we'll continue immediately after the vote.

Thank you.

• (1555)

(Pause)

• (1615)

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull, if you'd like to proceed, it's up to you.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I was finished, Mr. Chair. Thanks very much.

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, if you'd like to go, you were next on the list.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Chair, in the spirit of co-operation, I will cede my time to Mr. Barlow. We have had some discussions.

The Chair: Mr. Barlow.

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

In the spirit of the season and in the spirit of giving, I will withdraw my motion and replace that with a gentleman's agreement, which I trust we will all abide by.

We have come to an agreement that we will have a briefing—a two-hour meeting—on or before December 22. We'll invite officials from the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the P.E.I. Potato Board and a representative of the minister of agriculture or the P.E.I. government—whoever they feel is able to attend. Again, this is an invitation. If they cannot attend, we'll try to work around it.

Then we'll have a discussion on the B.C. issue as a subcommittee sometime in the new year.

The Chair: The clerk has informed me that we need unanimous consent for Mr. Barlow to withdraw his motion. I don't foresee that being a problem, but I'm going to ask quickly.

(Motion withdrawn)

The Chair: Good. Okay, we're going to move forward.

Mr. Clerk, I don't think we require a vote. As Mr. Barlow said, it was an arranged conversation. Just in case, so we're all on board, I'll ask for unanimous consent to Mr. Barlow's motion.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That is passed.

One thing I was not able to do earlier was to introduce our analyst. I'm going to give that opportunity.

Dan, over to you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Farrelly (Analyst): Good afternoon.

My name is Daniel Farrelly. I am an analyst with the Library of Parliament. My colleague Corentin Bialais is also assigned to this committee, but he is unfortunately unable to join us today.

Our work on the committee is part of the Library's mandate. We carry out research and provide parliamentarians with independent, non-partisan and evidence-based analyses.

[*English*]

I won't go into detail right now about everything we do. I will simply say to members and their staff, please never hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Analyst.

Mr. Clerk, I don't know if you had the opportunity.... Some of our committee members were coming from the House. Perhaps you'd like to briefly introduce yourself, so that all the members know who you are.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is Benoit Jolicoeur. I am clerk of the committee. I was previously clerk of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

It is a pleasure for me to work with you here at the agriculture committee. Likewise, for any questions that members or members' staff may have, please do not hesitate. I am always here at the service of the committee.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Lehoux, go ahead.

It will then be Mr. Perron's turn.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair

I want to first congratulate you on getting elected and say that you can always count on my collaboration.

I would like to request the unanimous consent on the following motion. The proposal is a favourable one. I think it is important, as it helps complete the circle. It concerns the last Parliament.

Here is the motion:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food during the 2nd session of the 43rd Parliament, entitled "Room to Grow: Strengthening Food Processing Capacity in Canada for Food Security and Exports" be adopted as a report of the committee in the current session of Parliament; and that the Chair be authorized to present the report and that a government response be requested.

For clarity's sake, I want to specify that the motion concerns the last report we worked on, the one on processing capacity. That report was tabled.

So I seek unanimous consent.

The Chair: Mr. Perron, that is another motion.

Mr. Yves Perron: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, you have the floor concerning the motion that is up for discussion.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I thank Mr. Lehoux for this motion, which I support.

However, the report was finished. We just didn't have a chance to do everything. I think Pat Finnigan responded, but the government called an election.

I am wondering whether this is urgent or whether we could discuss it further. We know that supply chains were really put to the test, and this report could enlighten the committee if it decided to consider this issue in depth.

If Mr. Lehoux wants to only get the report adopted and request a government response, we have no problem with that.

The Chair: Mr. Lehoux, go ahead.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Of course, I would like us to submit the report as part of the 44th Parliament and the minister to receive it as soon as possible.

In the current pandemic context, it must be understood that there are still many issues with processing capacity, not only at home, in Quebec, but across Canada. I really want us to table the report. We will see what will happen after, but, as a first step, I believe the report should be tabled as soon as possible.

[English]

The Chair: Let's go to Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to Mr. Perron for putting this forward. I was just wondering whether we could receive this motion in writing. I would actually like to read it. I don't know whether it's me or whether other members feel the same way, but I find that when these motions are moved in committee, it's really nice to see them in their written form as well. I don't know if the clerk could send that around, but it would be really helpful just to have a read through and consider the full breadth of it. I didn't quite catch all of the details when Mr. Perron read it. It might have been the echo in the room as well with the translation, but I would be happy to review it.

Thanks.

The Chair: Mr. Lehoux, I know it might be confusing for those attending virtually. I think it is a good point to consider. We do have some new members and that's something to consider on that side. I'm going to go to Ms. Taylor Roy, and I'll let Mr. Lehoux consider whether or not that's something he would allow, for the members to read and review and then perhaps for it to be tabled. I'm not sure, but I will go to Ms. Taylor Roy.

• (1625)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to say that as a new member, I would at the very least abstain because I have not read this report. I don't know anything about it, so for me to vote and have it tabled seems a little premature. In addition to the motion, I would actually like to be able to review the report if it's coming from this committee in this session now.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Lehoux, go ahead.

Mr. Richard Lehoux: We did do a lot of work on this report last year. The bottleneck prevented us from tabling it, but the work had been done. We met with a lot of witnesses. I would not want us to start that work over. I see no issue with us improving the report afterwards, but we must be aware of the current situation in processing on the ground.

The notice of motion I am presenting today calls for us to submit the report to the committee and to send it as soon as possible. I have no problem with my colleagues taking the time to read it, on the contrary, but I would like that to be done quickly, as the situation on the ground in the processing sector is pretty urgent, after all.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Next is Mr. MacGregor, and then if there are no other comments, we can move to see if there's consent or how best to move forward.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Chair.

Maybe just for the benefit of Ms. Taylor Roy and Mr. Turnbull, I can assure them that the committee in the 43rd Parliament did some very important and dedicated work on this report. We all went through it together—the Liberal members, the Conservative members, the Bloc Québécois. We all came to a consensus. There were no dissenting reports because we all felt it accurately reflected what we heard in testimony. All my Conservative colleague is trying to do is to retable a report that was tabled with the full support of the committee, and we're trying to do so to get the government to respond to some very important recommendations.

If that helps put some of my newer colleagues' minds at ease, that's simply what we're trying to do. I can assure you that the report was adopted unanimously by all members of the committee in the previous Parliament.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Seeing no other discussion, I will ask if there's unanimous consent to move forward with Mr. Lehoux's motion on the floor.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, I believe we have it.

Thank you, Mr. Lehoux.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, go ahead.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Congratulations on this motion, Mr. Lehoux. I think it was very important for us to adopt it.

I would like to give notice of a group of motions. The clerk already has them and should be able to send them to all committee members. For those in attendance, I have a copy in both official languages I will have distributed. If I may, I will read the notices of motion.

If everyone has received their copy, I will go ahead and read these notices of motion, Mr. Chair. It is a group of four motions.

The first motion concerns the resumption of the study that was suspended.

That the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food resume its study on the environmental contribution of agriculture that the committee undertook during the 2nd session of the 43rd Parliament; that the committee continue to hear witnesses as agreed to in the original motion and finalize its report; and that all previously provided testimony and documents be considered by the committee as needed during the current session.

The second motion is about CUSMA's track record.

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food assess the impacts of the first year of implementation of the Canada-United States–Mexico Agreement, CUSMA, on the agriculture and agri-food sector by hearing from witnesses over a period of no fewer than five (5) meetings and report its findings and recommendations to the House.

The third motion concerns reciprocity of standards.

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on reciprocity of standards, labelling and traceability of food products entering Canada to determine whether standards and regulations on food products imported and sold in Canada are met and enforced appropriately; that the committee hold at least six (6) meetings on this matter; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

The fourth motion is about slaughter capacity.

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study to determine what actions can be taken by the Government of Canada to ensure stability and increased slaughter capacity, as well as competitiveness in the regions of Quebec and Canada, with a view to increasing food safety and animal welfare and reducing the environmental footprint of transportation; that the committee hold at least four (4) meetings on this matter; that the committee hear witnesses in relation to this matter; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

I am done reading the notices of motion.

If there is consent, I would now like to debate the fourth motion. It is closely related to the motion our colleague Mr. Lehoux just moved, and it could complement it.

Earlier, I was happy to hear our colleagues from various political parties suggest that we examine certain aspects of processing more thoroughly. I think that the regional slaughter sector urgently needs us to consider this issue. It also needs concrete action to be taken to increase capacity in the regions and to ensure the consistency of government regulations on transportation conditions, for animal welfare and for the reaching of objectives in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. Animals are transported to Pennsylvania to be slaughtered, while we are asking Canadians to avoid travelling as much as possible. The lack of consistency is flagrant.

I think this matter is urgent. So I am submitting these notices of motion to the committee, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

• (1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perron.

[*English*]

My understanding is that obviously you're putting on notice that these are motions you hope to consider.

One thing I failed to mention so far is that, in the last Parliament, we had a very effective, albeit informal, subcommittee group where we could come together and discuss these. It's not my position to say, but as I look around and look at some of the folks who are raising their hands maybe this is a great opportunity for us to pull together a subcommittee in January to discuss the direction of where this committee will go beyond, of course, the technical briefings that were introduced by Mr. Barlow.

I saw Mr. Barlow's hand followed by Mr. MacGregor.

Would you like to go ahead, Mr. Barlow?

Mr. John Barlow: Thanks, Mr. Chair. You pretty much said exactly what I was saying.

I think all of us will have some ideas for initiatives that we want to bring up. I don't have a problem with the ones that Mr. Perron has put forward, and I know Mr. MacGregor will have some as well as us.

Can I suggest that we accept these notices of motion and bring these up, as well as other ideas, at our first subcommittee meeting in January or whenever you schedule that?

The Chair: We now go to Mr. MacGregor, and I see Mr. Drouin's hand as well.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Likewise, Mr. Chair. I will accept these as notices of motion.

We just passed routine motions, which specify a 48-hour notice period. I think there are some great ideas here, but I would like a bit of time to go over and consider them.

I'll accept these as notices for today. Thank you.

• (1635)

The Chair: Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I'll be very quick.

On what Mr. Barlow and what Mr. MacGregor said, I agree.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Perron, are you in favour of having a conversation in January?

Mr. Yves Perron: I am always favourable to having conversations. The general intent has been understood. These motions were basically put forward as a notice. I was proposing that we debate the fourth motion right away. I understand that my colleagues do not want to debate this motion today, but that they are favourable to it.

Have I understood correctly?

As this requires unanimous consent, I don't think we will spend any more time on it today anyway, but you know what my intentions are.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perron.

I know from the 43rd Parliament that slaughterhouse capacity and processing is a major issue that you've raised as a member of Parliament and certainly as an advocate in Quebec.

I don't want to speak for Mr. Barlow, Mr. MacGregor or Mr. Drouin, and I don't know if it was unanimous consent on what has been put forward. I think there is perhaps an agreement that the motions you've put forward have merit and are worthy of discussion, but I think it's important that we come together and share our priorities perhaps in a forum such as the subcommittee to be able to decide what we want moving forward.

I don't want to presume for the other members of the House. I'll leave the floor open if anyone wants to opine.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Chair, I'm not ready to give unanimous consent to start the study on number four at this time.

The Chair: I'm seeing the same from Mr. MacGregor and I believe Mr. Drouin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, I think that all the members of this committee understand the importance of food processing, especially in the regions, but this may be a conversation the subcommittee could have in January.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Seeing that we have our business laid out before us for at least our meeting next week and then certainly moving forward with the British Columbia work that Mr. Barlow had mentioned, what I would say is that I'm happy to work with the clerk to organize a subcommittee with the vice-chairs and Mr. MacGregor, and of course the representative on the government side, to have these conversations. I will endeavour to find the time for translation and that work.

If there's nothing else to discuss, I would ask if there's a move to adjourn and to continue our work when we're able to line up our meeting with the P.E.I. potato issue.

An hon. member: I so move.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you, everyone. The meeting is adjourned.

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