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# Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 001**

Monday, December 13, 2021

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• (1105)

[*English*]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Danielle Widmer):** Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motion, entertain points of order or participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party.

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Go ahead, Mr. Long.

**Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.):** Thank you.

Good morning to everybody here. It's wonderful to be back on HUMA.

I would like to move that my colleague, Bobby Morrissey, stand as the chair of HUMA.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Mr. Long that Mr. Morrissey be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** Mr. Morrissey has been duly elected the chair of the committee. Congratulations.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Clerk:** I invite Mr. Morrissey to take the chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.)):** Thank you, committee members.

For somebody who loves elections, this was a bit different.

Before we move to the nomination of the vice-chairs, can we go around the table? I'll ask each of the members to introduce themselves to the committee, because there are a number who are new.

We'll start with Ms. Kusie.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Good morning, everyone. I'm Stephanie Kusie. I'm the member of Parliament for Calgary Midnapore.

I've been an elected member for five years this spring, and I'm returning to HUMA for the second time. It's a pleasure to be here, and I look forward to working with everyone.

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

[*English*]

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC):** Good morning, everybody. I'm Matt Jeneroux, the member of Parliament for Edmonton Riverbend.

I've only ever made a guest appearance at HUMA. I've never been on the committee, but I'm looking forward to joining the committee this year.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** I'm Alex Ruff, the MP for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

I was elected in 2019. I spent 25-plus years in the military. This is my first time at HUMA.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ):** Good morning. I'm Monique Pausé. I'm a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Today I'm replacing Louise Chabot, who couldn't be here.

[*English*]

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Hello. I'm Bonita Zarrillo. I am a first-time elected member out of B.C., from Port Moody—Coquitlam.

I spent almost nine years as a city councillor. For the majority of that, I sat on the accessibility committee in my city.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.):** Good morning. My name is Soraya Martinez Ferrada. I'm the member of Parliament for Hochelaga in Montreal. I was elected for the first time in 2019.

[*English*]

I feel new but not new.

[*Translation*]

However, I'm new to this committee and I'm very happy to be here.

[English]

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** My name is Tony Van Bynen. I'm the member of Parliament for Newmarket—Aurora.

I was elected in 2019, so I see this as the second half of the first term of office.

**Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** I'm Chad Collins from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. I'm a newly elected member.

I was a long-time member of Hamilton city council, and I'm looking forward to working with everyone here on the committee.

**Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.):** I'm Michael Coteau. I represent Don Valley East.

I'm newly elected, and I spent 10 years in the Ontario legislature.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Good morning. My name is Wayne Long. I'm from the riding of Saint John—Rothsay in New Brunswick.

This is my third time on HUMA. I'm thrilled to be back. I can say first-hand that the work that HUMA does is so important to the lives of so many Canadians. It's a great committee to be on.

I'm looking forward to working with all of my colleagues for the betterment of all of our constituents.

**Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC):** I'm Bob Benzen from Calgary Heritage. It's my first time on the committee. I look forward to having my next meeting in Ottawa and being with all of you. I think this will be a great committee, too, so I'm glad to be on board.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, committee members—

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Sorry to interrupt, Mr. Chair. However, I would like to point out that, when Mr. Benzen introduced himself, we couldn't hear the interpretation. It doesn't matter for the introductions, but for the next time he wants to speak, it's important to make sure that the interpretation works.

[English]

**Mr. Wayne Long:** On a point of order, there's no translation.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** When Mr. Benzen, who is participating through Zoom, spoke, the interpreter couldn't hear him.

• (1110)

**The Chair:** One moment, please, Ms. Pauzé.

[English]

**Mr. Bob Benzen:** Mr. Chair, I'll take my mask off quickly. Hopefully this is a little bit better for sound.

Again, Calgary Heritage is my riding. I was elected in 2017 in a by-election. It's my first time on the committee. I look forward to being in Ottawa for the next meeting. Hopefully there will be no problem with translation.

I'm sorry about that.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Mr. Chair, I must speak up again. The interpreter is telling us that the sound keeps cutting out when Mr. Benzen is talking to the committee.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay. We'll proceed to the election of the vice-chairs for the committee, if the committee is in agreement.

I invite the clerk to preside over the election of the vice-chairs.

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

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

Mr. Jeneroux.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** I'd like to nominate Stephanie Kusie for the role of vice-chair.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Mr. Jeneroux that Stephanie Kusie be elected first vice-chair.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Kusie is elected first vice-chair of the committee.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

[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'm now prepared to receive motions for the second vice-chair.

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** I'd like to nominate Louise Chabot for the role of second vice-chair.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Soraya Martinez Ferrada that Ms. Chabot be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

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

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

[English]

**The Chair:** That concludes the election of the officers of the committee.

I have a brief opening statement, but before that, I want to share my perspective on the committee. I've served in public life for a long period of time, with colleagues of different political stripes. I always respect the fact that colleagues are elected by the people in their respective ridings, and while we may not always agree on policy, you have to respect the fact that they were elected by the people in their riding to be their voice here in the Parliament of Canada and in the committee.

I have a great tolerance for disagreement and differences of opinion, but at the end of the day, the work of the government must proceed. My expectation is flexible, but the work of the committee must proceed. I'm looking forward to the debate in this committee. I've sat on it before—for a number of years—and have enjoyed the very human issues that this committee is charged with dealing with, and to those new members coming in, I think you'll find that a very rewarding part of this committee.

I have to acknowledge my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. You replaced my good friend, Mr. Miller. He and I sat together and became very good friends. You could say that we didn't share a lot politically, but he was a fine gentleman and somebody I grew to respect a lot.

As I said, this is the first meeting of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021.

Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. The webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

Today's meeting is also taking place in the webinar format. Webinars are for the public committee meetings and are available only to members, their staff and witnesses. Members enter immediately as active participants. All functionalities for active participants remain the same. Staff will be non-active participants and can therefore only view the meeting in gallery view.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants to this meeting that screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations from health authorities, as well as the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on October 19, 2021, to remain healthy and safe, all those attending the meeting in person are to maintain two-metre physical distancing and must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room. It is highly recommended that masks be worn at all times, including when seated. You must maintain proper hand hygiene by using the provided hand sanitizer at the room entrance. As the chair, I will be enforcing these measures for the duration of the meeting. I thank members in advance for their co-operation.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow. For members participating on Zoom, you may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French. If the interpretation is lost, please inform me immediately, and we will ensure interpretation is properly restored before resuming the meeting.

For members participating on Zoom, the “raise hand” feature at the bottom of the screen can be used at any time if you wish to speak or to alert the chair. For members participating in person, proceed as you usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room.

Before speaking, please wait until you're recognized by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute. All comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

• (1115)

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

Now we have to deal with routine motions. With the agreement of the committee, we can proceed to the consideration of routine motions. The committee clerk has circulated a list of the routine motions that the committee adopted in the last Parliament.

As a reminder, a motion must be moved by a committee member, and it is easier to consider them one by one.

Mr. Long.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Chair, with respect to routine motions, I'm ready to begin. Are we good to go?

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead

**Mr. Wayne Long:** 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.

**The Chair:** Does the committee agree to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** 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.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Do we have agreement to invite the analyst to sit at the table?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Welcome, Ms. Lafontaine-Émond.

[*English*]

I'll ask the analyst to introduce herself to the committee.

• (1120)

**Ms. Isabelle Lafontaine-Émond (Committee Researcher):** Hello, everyone. I'm Isabelle Lafontaine-Émond from the Library of Parliament.

I'm happy to be here. I've served on this committee before. I am here if you have any content-related questions.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Long, please continue.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** 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.

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** 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.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** We'll go to the next one, Mr. Long.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** 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.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The next one is very important.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Yes, this is a very important one here. 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.

**The Chair:** Is that unanimous?

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** That was a quick one.

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 [one representative] be made at the discretion of the Chair.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** I'm sorry, but in my notes it says, "payment for more representatives".

• (1125)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** That's my mistake.

Would you like me to read it again?

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** No, I just wanted to make sure, because it's my first time and I'm looking at the notes.

**The Chair:** Yes, the notes are correct.

Do we have agreement then?

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** 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.

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** 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.

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** 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.

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Next, 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 the caucus represented on the committee to invite those members to file with the clerk of the committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the committee consider;

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

(c) During the clause-by-clause consideration of the 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.

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Next, 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.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1130)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Next, 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.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Before we get to other routine motions adopted in 43-2, I'm going to ask the clerk to speak to why there is a recommendation that we do not adopt this next motion.

**The Clerk:** In the package that was circulated to all members, there was a routine motion that was adopted in the previous Parliament that was related to in camera sittings. There could be modifications if the committee chooses, but in terms of that section, it says:

That all votes taken in camera, with the exception of votes regarding the consideration of draft reports, be recorded in the Minutes of Proceedings, including how each member voted when recorded votes are requested;

That any motion to sit in camera is debatable and amendable.

That often goes against the current practices of committees and *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, so it is the decision of the committee as to how they wish to proceed with this. It was adopted last year, but there were some inconsistencies with the practices of the House of Commons.

It is up to the committee as to how they wish to move forward with this motion.

**The Chair:** I believe we have Madam Zarrillo.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I had a question that maybe relates to this. Is this the right time to table a motion around in camera or witnesses?

**The Chair:** Is it a new motion or related to this routine motion?

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** I believe it's a new motion.

**The Chair:** Then no.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** I have two.

**The Chair:** That would be under committee business, but if it's relating to this motion—

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Do you mind if I check with my support?

I understand that it's related to routine motions, so I'm not sure if it can wait for the other committee business.

**The Chair:** Routine motions would be movable at this time.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Okay, so I have two, if I can read them.

**The Chair:** It will be left to the committee as to how we will deal with them, but please read them into the record.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Mr. Chair, I'm not getting any audio so I can't hear very well. I'm not getting any audio from your microphone.

**The Chair:** You can proceed with moving your motions under routine motions if it's related to routine motions, and the committee will decide how it's going to deal with them.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Now I can hear. That's awesome. Thank you very much.

The first one relates to witnesses. It says:

That each party represented on the committee be entitled to select one witness per two-hour witness panel.

The second one relates to in camera. It says:

That the committee may meet in camera only for the following purposes:

- (a) to consider a draft report;
- (b) to attend briefings concerning national security;
- (c) to consider lists of witnesses;
- (d) for any other reason, with the unanimous consent of the committee;

That all votes taken in camera, with the exception of votes regarding the consideration of draft reports, be recorded in the Minutes of Proceedings, including how each member voted when recorded votes are requested;

That any motion to sit in camera is debatable and amendable.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** You have heard the two motions. It is left to the committee to decide how it wants to proceed.

Are there any comments?

Just for your consideration, one of those was the routine motion that goes contrary to the House of Commons.

• (1135)

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Is that the in camera one, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm sorry. I was trying to take notes, because before I vote, I like to know what the vote is about. Ms. Zarrillo was reading the motions too fast. We don't have them in front of us.

Is there any way that we can get them on our telephones quickly?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** The committee can choose to defer them to another meeting, Madame, so that you have the chance to review them in detail. It's whatever the committee's wishes are. I know you do not have the written text.

What is the committee's choice? Do you want to vote on them now, or do you want to defer?

Ms. Zarrillo, do you have a copy in both official languages to circulate?

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** I do have copies, but I don't have enough for the full committee.

**The Chair:** What are the wishes of the committee?

Ms. Kusie.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** We certainly have no problem deferring until we've had an opportunity to further evaluate and discuss.

**The Chair:** Mr. Van Bynen, did you have your hand up?

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** I'm of the same view, Mr. Chair. I would like to see the motion before me, so that I could give it the consideration it needs.

**The Chair:** He agreed with you, Ms. Kusie.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you very much, Chair.

**The Chair:** I'm getting a sense that the committee would like to defer your two motions, Madam Zarrillo, until they have a chance to see them in written text in both official languages. Then we will deal with them at that time.

Would I have agreement from the committee to proceed that way?

I have agreement.

Thank you, Ms. Zarrillo.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We will put that on the agenda for the next meeting.

Where are we at, Clerk?

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Excuse me, Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Long.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you, Chair, and good morning again.

Chair, I believe the minister is prepared and available to meet with the committee right away, immediately, given the urgency of this bill. I would like to move a motion to have the minister appear at 11:45 a.m.

**The Chair:** It's been moved by Mr. Long.

You have heard the motion. It is simple. Would the committee like to hear from the minister at 11:45 a.m.? He must be close.

What is the wish of the committee?

Ms. Kusie.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Can we suspend momentarily, please, Chair?

**The Chair:** We certainly can, Ms. Kusie.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** We will suspend for five minutes, and then we'll come back to make a decision.

• (1135) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1145)

**The Chair:** Committee members, we agreed to a five-minute suspension.

For the information of the committee, the minister's appearance is on Bill C-3.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** I apologize for that, Chair. It's obviously Minister O'Regan with respect to C-3, given the urgency with which we need this passed for Canadians.

The minister has made himself available. Typically, my experience is that it is the opposition parties that try to bring ministers before committee. I know it's a little unorthodox for us to have the minister ready to go, but in the name of time, Minister O'Regan is prepared to come before committee immediately.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Kusie.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Yes, Chair, I think everyone in this room absolutely anticipated the expedition of C-3. It's very timely. Frankly, I certainly didn't want to be here over the holidays, but I was prepared to stay until the end of this week in an effort to expedite this bill, because I recognize the significance of this bill for the government.

I must say, I think it's in very poor form for the committee to be informed the day of the appearance of the minister. We had no prior information of this. I don't think it's a good precedent.

The chair talked about working together in a positive and collaborative manner. To have the minister appear without any time for us to prepare for the minister with our questions, considering that we were anticipating perhaps not even the minister but discussing the

bill itself later in the week, it's not really how we would like to see things done or to see things done in the future. We certainly would have appreciated some notification as to who and what and when. We didn't receive that here.

That's unfortunate, particularly when we have new members on the committee, and certainly from the NDP an entirely new member who, as I said.... In my almost five years here, I'm still learning the ins and outs of committee business and committee practice, so it's really not preferable. I really don't think it's in good form. It doesn't feel very good, as we are in the holiday season here.

I just felt I should voice all of that, Chair. Thank you very much.

• (1150)

**The Chair:** It's a valid point, Ms. Kusie. Your points are taken.

Go ahead, Mr. Long.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Chair, I would agree with the context of what MP Kusie said.

We are in unique times, and we certainly take your point. This is not a norm, for sure, but certainly there was no intent to blindside here. The minister has offered to come before committee immediately. Again, we saw in the debate last week in the House how important this bill is to Canadians, and the more quickly we can have the minister before us to answer our questions, the better for all of our constituents.

**The Chair:** We have a comment from the member for Owen Sound.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Thanks, Chair.

I just want to echo MP Kusie's comments that, as somebody relatively new, getting a minister here is great news. I do commend the government and the minister himself for becoming available, but for this bill we have some potential amendments we may want to introduce. We definitely want to understand why the minister and the government didn't include them in this bill right off the get-go. In order to properly prepare and deal with this, I guess my question back to you, Chair, and to the clerk is this: Is there any other availability for the minister to come as soon as possible later this week?

I'm more than willing to sit. Maybe I'm like my colleague. I'll sit here right through Christmas Day, if required, to get the work done for the people of Canada.

**The Chair:** Mr. Jeneroux is next.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd echo my colleague Madam Kusie's comments on this. I've been on committees now for almost 10 years. It is poor form to do this, particularly at the start of a brand new committee.



I want to make one additional point to all colleagues here. This is our committee. Committees are supposed to operate independently of the minister. If you're approached by a minister saying, "Hey, this is the only time I can make it", think of your colleagues here. We're all here to do good work in Parliament and to say, "You know what, Minister? This is our committee. This is something where, collectively, we want to have a good rapport with everybody in this room." I would just make that point.

I'd be fully prepared to see the minister here.

In the future, these are just words of advice to my colleagues on the other side.

**The Chair:** It's a point well taken, Mr. Jeneroux.

Go ahead, Madam Zarrillo.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a quick question about the format when the minister arrives. Could we get a little bit of context around what the format will be? Is it a presentation or is it an opportunity for questions?

If it is an opportunity for questions, as the NDP representative on this committee, do I just have the one round of two and a half minutes? Should I prepare a question in that time frame and in that format?

**The Chair:** As I understand it, the format—well, first the committee would have to agree, and we haven't got there yet—would follow the established procedure. The speaking order would be as it was adopted by the committee, Madam Zarrillo.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Seeing nothing further, those were valid points made....

I have someone who wishes to speak.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** It's Michael Coteau from Don Valley East. Thank you, Chair.

I want to say that, being a new member here and new to this committee, to have the minister come on the first day is quite impressive.

For the people in my community of Don Valley East, when it comes to Bill C-3 and paid sick days, it's an important issue. If I have the opportunity to ask the minister questions and get some more clarity on the bill, that's a good thing.

**The Chair:** We've heard the interventions. The opposition has a valid point, but what's the wish of the committee? I don't get a sense that we do not want to hear from the minister, but that we put the governing side on notice that this will not be accepted in the future.

Am I interpreting that correctly?

• (1155)

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** I was wondering, per my question back to you and to the clerk, if is there any other availability. Can we get the minister later this week?

**The Chair:** I do not have that information. The motion informed us that the minister is available now. The committee can request that the minister reappear, as the committee chooses.

Go ahead, Madame Pauzé.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I want to comment on your response to Ms. Zarrillo, Mr. Chair.

Regarding the minister, I assume we'll stick to what we agreed to in the routine motions, which is six minutes for each party. Is that right?

**The Chair:** Yes.

[*English*]

Go ahead, Mr. Jeneroux.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** On a point of clarification, Mr. Chair, the motion was—no offence to my colleague across the way—a little haphazardly put together in terms of how long the minister plans to be here. Is it one meeting? Is it two meetings? Those might be important things to clarify before we begin.

I want to correct one thing that you said, too, Mr. Chair. I don't want to give the impression that we don't want the minister here. Certainly, we've given the impression that we want to have the minister here. We're just making sure that we make full use of our time with him.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux. I interpreted that you were not opposed to his coming, but you were putting the government on notice that short notice would be unacceptable.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Can I give some clarification?

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Long.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thanks, Chair.

The minister will be here for one hour. I'm of the understanding that he did reach out to the Conservative Party critic directly and other parties, too, about his travel schedule with respect to appearing before the committee. That was my understanding.

Was there no dialogue at all?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** No, we did not hear from the minister at all relative to his appearance today or his availability over this week.

**The Chair:** Okay, well—

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour):** I'm happy to speak to that. I'm here.

**The Chair:** Mr. Minister, you still have not been invited to the committee yet, so—

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan:** That's true.

**The Chair:** We'll just hold for a moment.

Committee members, you've heard Mr. Long's explanation. We have the minister, who may be available. What are the wishes of the committee?

Mrs. Kusie.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Perhaps, since the minister is here, he could check his schedule for availability and confer with the committee if he has another opportunity within his schedule to return to us later in the week, please.

**The Chair:** We're getting ahead. We still have not agreed to have the minister appear before the committee. I'd prefer to deal with that, Mrs. Kusie, and then you can question him on anything when he's here.

Before we go to that, my colleague....

Yes...?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Are you speaking to me, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Thank you.

Again, I would like us to vote on my colleague's motion.

Time is running out. I think that everyone wants to know what the minister has to say. We could also ask him questions about the bill. If, in the spirit of the holidays and for everyone's benefit, the committee wants to adopt this bill quickly, it would be nice if we could ask the minister our questions promptly. If necessary, the minister may even be willing to come back to the committee. Why not? After the initial questions today, we'll see if we have any more questions for him afterwards.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** The last question is from Ms. Zarrillo, and then we will vote on the motion before the committee.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We weren't necessarily expecting this today. I have a colleague who was working on C-3 before it was brought to this committee. I would like to step away now to make room for Mr. Boulerice.

It's nice to see everybody today. I wish I could have stayed with you, but we'll see what happens. I might come back.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Welcome to the committee, Mr. Boulerice.

We'll have one last question, and we'll go to a vote.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** My question is for you, Chair. I didn't realize cutting off debate on this or any discussion on it was possible. Is it possible for me to move an amendment to the motion to call the minister later this week? We definitely want to see him here.

**The Chair:** It's my understanding we will vote on the motion, and you can vote it down or accept it.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Chair, my question was whether I can move an amendment or not. It's a procedural question.

**The Chair:** Yes, a motion to amend is always in order.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** All right, so—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Sorry, Mr. Chair.

Before my colleague can move a motion to amend, I've asked that the original motion be put to a vote.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Honourable member, there was still debate on the motion. Now in the debate we have an amendment that was moved.

Would you repeat that?

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Thanks, Chair.

I move that the minister appear at a later time this week.

**The Chair:** You've heard the amendment. Can we vote on the motion as amended?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to thank my colleague for putting forward this amendment, which to me seems incredibly reasonable.

Again, we were not prepared for the minister to come here today and present to us on Bill C-3. Again, it's just very disappointing. I certainly was prepared to have this discussion over this week.

I want to clarify for my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound that I certainly would sit here until the new year. I just said it was not my preference, but certainly, if that is what is required, I would be more than happy to do that.

I think we really should think about the precedent this sets and about the respect we have for each of the members of this committee, in that they would come here and be prepared for the minister. As well, I'm sure that the minister, as a good minister and a strong minister, would want to ensure that he heard from all of the members of the committee and was prepared to take their questions on any matter in the bill. I certainly believe that's what he would like to do so that, when we bring this legislation back to the House, he can do it with the utmost confidence that it was evaluated in every way possible.

We're here on day one, heading into hour two, and we're already in this position where, on this side of the House, we're made to feel uncomfortable. I'm sure that our NDP colleague, who I see has been replaced, is also wondering if this is normal. I certainly can assure her that it is not. I think it's very important that we consider the amendment by the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Certainly, it's a busy week for everyone as we head into the holiday season and depart for what will be six weeks, but I have many events this week that I would be willing to move in an effort to accommodate the minister, because I certainly understand that he must have a busy schedule as well. I even have my Christmas luncheon booked with my staff. If I had to, I would be willing to forgo that.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** That will be fun.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** It will be fun. Thank you very much, member for Edmonton Riverbend.

As such, I really think that, when we consider the sacrifices we are willing to make, we can reconsider if in fact the minister can take a look at his schedule. I think this was a reason the government was so intent on bringing a virtual Parliament back to the House of Commons. It's so we can have these types of flexibilities to be able to insert ourselves anywhere at any time—at the last minute even.

If the minister is able to put aside his activities of the day—at the last minute, I'm sure—in Ottawa, which might have been a nice luncheon or, in Newfoundland and Labrador, perhaps an afternoon tea—an Earl Grey tea maybe—certainly he can re-evaluate his schedule again and look for another possible time.

Again, I really hope that he might possibly do that, because certainly it would allow us to have some time to prepare, and we could certainly head into the holiday season with Bill C-3 going back to the House and perhaps even passing, with the confidence that we had addressed all of it. I would certainly feel a lot better finishing my Christmas shopping and doing my Christmas baking knowing that we had evaluated this in its entirety. I think everyone else would as well.

• (1205)

I know the member for Edmonton Riverbend is a relatively new father once again, and I'm sure he would feel better preparing for the holidays with confidence, knowing that we had given this evaluation as well.

I think everyone in this room definitely feels as though Bill C-3 is a priority. We have many members, including our own shadow minister for labour and shadow minister for justice, who believe in this legislation and believe it is important to get it passed. Certainly, it is our duty and obligation to have done a solid evaluation of it.

With the minister's last minute arrival here, I have not even had an opportunity to consult with those shadow ministers to get their ideas as to the kinds of questions they would like to have answered, and what their thoughts might be before we return this bill to the House. We are considering that as well, and it would also be good to get their input.

In addition, we have another colleague who was considering an amendment based on some legislation he was evaluating. It would be great if we could have a conversation with him as well in an effort to try to figure out if we can implement his ideas into the bill, but again, given that we just found out about the minister's appearance this morning, we won't be able to do that in a timely fashion. That's very disappointing, and it will also be a disappointment to this member of our caucus.

As an individual, I always like to be really expedient and get things done as soon as possible. I would like to compliment my colleague, MP Long, for being able to get the minister here so quickly. However, there are also some times when expediency must give way to careful, prudent and thoughtful evaluation, particularly when we're talking about Canadian legislation. This would definitely be a case where it's important to do that.

In fact, the official opposition has shown very good collaboration with the government since the beginning of the pandemic. I recall my previous time in HUMA when we were called at the very last

minute, almost in the middle of the night I'll say, in an effort to pass the initial legislation dealing with the pandemic. You know, I think that was also like Bill C-3. It was very valuable and very necessary, and as the official opposition, we did what we had to do to serve Canadians and get things done.

We even did that again when I held the role of shadow minister for families, children and social development in terms of what I saw with the CERB and the CRB. There were different permutations of the legislation, because with every amendment that was made, in fact, another subset of Canadians the legislation did not serve was identified. At that point, we had to go back and amend the legislation again.

• (1210)

I would argue that we're even seeing that again with the CCPD, and unfortunately as well—I know my NDP colleague will agree—with the GIS clawbacks based on the CERB. I'm seeing some mild nodding of heads.

My point is that we've always been agreeable to come and do what was necessary to pass legislation and to get that legislation for Canadians. In fact, we would do the same here, because this is the spirit in which we like to do things, to get things done and to move things forward.

I guess that's why we're so very surprised by the appearance of the minister here today, which, again, is fantastic. As my colleague said, sometimes it's very difficult to get ministers to appear, which has been my past experience.

This minister in particular I know is a very warm, accommodating individual. I know in his previous role as minister for natural resources, a role that's very dear to my heart as a member of Parliament from Alberta, he certainly went out of his way to make all sorts of accommodations to work for both me and my citizens, as well as the citizens of Alberta, and the natural resources sector as well. I certainly can see that he is doing the same thing in this role, by being available to speak on Bill C-3.

I'm sure in his previous career as a journalist, he also had to exhibit the flexibility he is showing here today in being ready and available to talk about Bill C-3, particularly so early in the morning. I've heard from other friends who were anchors and such that you had to get up at 3 a.m. That I'm not sure I'm willing to—

**Mr. Wayne Long:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** —do. To sit here through Christmas, for certain.

Again, Bill C-3 is very relevant, and it's wonderful that the minister is here to—

**Mr. Wayne Long:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kusie, it's a point of order from Mr. Long.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Okay.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Chair, I've not seen an opposition party ever filibuster the appearance of a minister before a committee. I find it incredibly bizarre.

However, I'd also speak to relevance, Chair. I feel like I'm watching the movie *Inception*. We're about four layers deep here.

I would ask that you rule on the relevance. Thank you, Chair.

● (1215)

**The Chair:** That is debate, Mr. Long.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Chair, we're filibustering the appearance of a minister before our committee.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** These are valuable points.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kusie has the floor.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you, Chair.

As I was saying, the minister and I share a mutual friend, I believe, who appeared on *Canada AM* several times—Karl Lohnes, a well-known designer. He shares the flexibility and warmth that the minister has as well. The minister, again with his flexibility and warmth—this is also displayed in this friend we have—also has appeared at Christmas in November, an event that I like to attend.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** I would like to invite the minister to attend that as well.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kusie, we have a point of order.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Yes.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Again, Chair, I question the relevance. The minister is here now. It's typical and beneficial for a minister to appear before a committee at the start of the process, not at the end of a process, for proper questioning from all parties.

Again, Chair, I ask you to rule on the relevance of MP Kusie's discussion. Thank you.

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

Ms. Kusie, could you bring your comments back to the amendment that's currently on the floor?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I'm speaking to the surprise with which we find the minister here. I was also thinking that we could perhaps get the amendment in both official languages, as I think it would be very useful. Certainly, I know that this is something that is laid out in our routine motions.

[*Translation*]

I'll continue my remarks in French. I have a little more to say to the committee about the presence of the minister today.

As I just said, it was really a surprise to see the minister here all of a sudden. We think that it's very important to make sure that Bill C-3 is adopted in the committee, of course, but also in the House before the Christmas break. That said, it's really difficult for us if we can't do our job properly. Our job is to review the bill so that we're ready for the minister's appearance. As I just said, I think that the minister also wants us to be ready to ask him questions.

I think that it's really important to look at the bill beforehand, as we've always done in the past with other bills. Canadians deserve to have bills properly considered. In order to properly study Bill C-3, we must have the opportunity to ask all the necessary questions and hear from all the relevant witnesses.

I want to check with the chair and the clerk of the committee to see whether the two proposals, meaning the amendment and the motion, are available in French. I would feel more confident if the two proposals before us were in both official languages.

● (1220)

[*English*]

I certainly support my caucus colleagues from Quebec. I'd also like to say that in addition to seeing the amendment and the motion presented in both official languages—

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I question the relevance of this.

I also want to respectfully remind my Conservative MP that the minister did send an email to MP Aitchison this morning and acknowledged that he would be appearing virtually. The critic actually said it was understandable and thanked him for letting him know. That was from the critic back to the minister. He said he understood the situation, and he said thank you to the minister for giving him a heads-up.

I'm puzzled by what's transpiring here.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Kusie, if you would, we have Mr. Jeneroux who wants to speak, and then we will go to Mr. Long when you conclude.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you, Chair. I would never want to hold up my colleague here, so I appreciate that.

As I was saying, I take the availability of all of these documents in both official languages very seriously. I wish we could also move on the modernization of the Official Languages Act as fast as we are moving here today, but unfortunately this has not been the case to this point. I will look forward to that at a later time.

I want to thank the committee for listening to my thoughts about the minister. Again, I have very warm and positive sentiments regarding him, not only as an individual based upon my history with him and his work with the natural resources sector but also with his willingness to be here today. I know, in that same spirit of collaboration and flexibility, he will make himself available at a later time when we have had the opportunity to prepare for that.

Perhaps, as I'm done my comments, I will pass to my colleague, the member of Parliament for Edmonton Riverbend.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Kusie. I will call the members in the speaking order—just a point.

Mr. Jeneroux.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's always a great day when you can listen to the good oration of my colleague from Calgary Midnapore.

I have a simple question of clarification. I asked earlier about the motion and it was identified that it was an hour long. I guess we're up against time limits and everything. I just ask you to give a little more clarification on that, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Actually, I will ask Mr. Long, as he moved the motion.

Just before we get to that, Ms. Kusie, it has been the practice of this committee that when minor motions are made during debate, the interpretation serves as translation, so they're not required to be translated.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Long, and then maybe we can move forward.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Chair, I'd have to get clarity from the minister or his department with respect to time. The minister said he could appear for an hour. That was going to be from 11:30 to 12:30 or 11:45 to 12:45. As you can see now, we're at 12:25. I'm not sure if we can extend the meeting if the minister's schedule permits. I'm not aware of that.

Maybe somebody could give us clarity whether the minister could stay for an hour from 12:30 to 1:30.

• (1225)

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** I just simply ask you, Mr. Chair, if we could clarify that before—

**The Chair:** Okay. Let me get clarification, and then I would ask to proceed to the vote on the amendment.

Committee, we'll suspend for a few minutes while we get the clarification that Mr. Jeneroux requested. Could somebody from the minister get me a clarification?

The committee is suspended until 12:30.

• (1225)

(Pause)

• (1225)

**The Chair:** Committee members, we agreed to suspend until 12:30 to give us a chance to get clarification from the minister. Could we come back to order?

Mr. Jeneroux asked the question of Mr. Long.

• (1230)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you, Chair.

Through you to MP Jeneroux, the minister is available for an hour. Given agreement, we can start right away for an hour.

**The Chair:** I recall that we were going to.... Those were the only people who had their hands up prior to....

Do you have something relative to the amended motion?

**Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC):** If I may, Mr. Chair, I just want to clarify. I fear my name may have been used in vain in my absence here. I did get an email from the minister this morning just apologizing that he wouldn't be here in person, but nothing about the committee specifically. It was just that the weather and the wind were bad in Newfoundland, to which I said, "Okay, great." I didn't really know he was speaking specifically about committee. I wasn't actually aware that the minister was going to be here.

That said, I don't really care. It would nice to be a little more explicit next time, but I'm happy to have the discussion and move along.

**The Chair:** I'm going to call the vote on the amendment to the main motion that was presented by my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

You have heard the amendment. Do you want to repeat it again, Mr. Ruff?

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Sure.

I move that the minister appear later this week.

**The Chair:** You have all heard the amendment. We shall vote on the amendment. We're going to do a recorded vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** We move to vote on the main motion that was moved by Mr. Long.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

**The Chair:** We will now move to welcome the minister to the committee.

We will suspend for two minutes to do a sound check, Mr. Minister, before you come live to the committee.

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan:** Okay.

**The Chair:** We'll take two minutes, committee.

• (1230)

(Pause)

• (1255)

**The Chair:** I am going to resume the committee meeting so that the committee can decide. We had made a decision to extend to 1:30 and the minister had agreed to that, but it is impossible to tell when the technical issues will be addressed.

Minister, it is not from your side; it's within the committee room.

What is the wish of the committee? Does the committee wish to adjourn?

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Are you looking for a motion?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** I hereby move that we invite the minister to appear at a soon but later date.

**The Chair:** There has been a motion made to the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The motion is unanimous and, Minister, you had the benefit of hearing that motion.

With that, members, I will entertain a motion of adjournment.

**An hon. member:** I so move.

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.

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