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• (1655)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

I apologize for the long delay. There were apparently technical difficulties, which I am sure will be dealt with.

Welcome to meeting number 52 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages.

On March 2, 2023, the committee received a request by four of its members pursuant to Standing Order 106(4) to discuss extending the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-13.

On that topic, I will give the floor to Mr. Beaulieu.

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

We requested this discussion under Standing Order 106(4) because, as we have seen, to date we have adopted only 20 of the 71 clauses to be considered. We have just two meetings left—one and a half in fact, given the time we have just lost. It is clear we will not have time to debate all of the clauses.

I would like to remind you that this is the first major reform of the Official Languages Act in 52 years. French is declining across Canada, including in Quebec. Now really is a critical time for the language issue. The government has admitted that French is in decline. Therefore, we must act and we must have sufficient time to get it right.

Ideally, we feel we need enough time to go through all of the clauses or, at the very least, to debate clause 54 of the bill, which is very important. It sets out the application of the Charter of the French Language to federally regulated businesses. All the opposition parties agree. We want to at least review up to clause 54.

I will kick off the discussion. That is the aim of today's meeting.

First of all, this is important to Quebec. Quebec expressed its expectations in a document about a year and a half ago. A while later, it specified its expectations in a document where it proposed amendments. Not much of that was incorporated into Bill C-13. Principles of asymmetry were mentioned. The problem is that the Official Languages Act is based on the principle that official language minorities are categorized by province. That means that in the 1960s, when there was a major movement, the Official Languages Act stipulated that in Quebec—the only francophone jurisdiction in America—the federal government would defend English.

We cannot go on like this. This must be changed, not only for Quebec's sake, but also for francophones outside Quebec. The future of French in Quebec matters to them because Quebec is also the market for artists from francophone and Acadian communities outside Quebec. Quebec is a key source of teachers and francophones who move to various regions of the country. I feel it is essential to do things right, to have the time to do—

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: One moment, Mr. Beaulieu. There is a point of order.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I understand that when a meeting is called under Standing Order 106(4), we are usually supposed to discuss committee business. I hear all of the arguments Mr. Beaulieu has raised, but with all due respect, I am not sure what they have to do with how the committee plans to proceed. I have difficulty understanding how the operations—

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The aim is—

The Chair: Just a moment, honourable members. We can only hear from one person at a time.

I take your point of order, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The floor is yours, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Joël Godin: Before moving on, Mr. Chair, I would like to point out that we've lost an hour and a half. What are you going to do about that wasted time? We need to consider that. We are now left with only one meeting and one hour. If we add today's wasted time, we will have one meeting, plus one hour, plus one and a half hour. Does this mean that, after two meetings and 30 minutes, we will extend our study?

I'd like some clarification, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Before moving forward with the discussion and giving the floor to Ms. Lattanzio, for the benefit of committee members and our audience, I would like to point out that today's meeting is our eighth one, and we agreed to extend it by the length of half a meeting. Regardless of what happened today, this is our eighth meeting.

Ms. Lattanzio, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Point of order, Mr. Chair. I had not finished speaking when Mr. Drouin called a point of order.

The Chair: In fact, that's another point of order.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Oh, I see.

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

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

I listened carefully to what my colleague, Mr. Beaulieu, said. However, I did not receive a motion from him. I don't know if you received it, Mr. Chair.

Has the clerk or anyone else received a motion regarding Mr. Beaulieu's request today?

The Chair: I just wanted to ask Mr. Beaulieu the same question, because neither I nor the clerk have received the motion.

I thought you were going to introduce your motion, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'd like to introduce more than one motion, but I wanted to see how people would react.

If you prefer, Mr. Chair, I can introduce my motion now.

The Chair: The ball is in your court, Mr. Beaulieu. You asked for an emergency meeting on Bill C-13. You need to be more specific about what you are asking of the committee.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Ideally, I would like us to continue with the study until we have debated every amendment. There is an amendment in particular which I would like to introduce, but I first wanted to check with my colleagues to see what they think. I would like to find a solution which will work well for us, to find time to vote on most of the amendments and to have a debate.

The Chair: I'm not sure I understand what you're saying, since we will indeed vote on every amendment.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We will vote on every amendment, but at a certain point we will stop debate on every one of them.

The Chair: That's correct.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I think we need to debate every amendment.

I can pass the floor to my colleague and, if need be, I will move a motion.

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

My colleague cannot pass the floor to someone else. He asked for a meeting under Standing Order 106(4). Does he have a motion to that effect, yes or no?

The Chair: That's exactly what I was going to say, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Beaulieu, let us know what you want and we can debate it. For now, it's a bit vague.

• (1700)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'll send you our motion.

The Chair: That's fine, Mr. Beaulieu.

It'll take a little time before we receive it.

Mr. Godin, would you like to speak now or wait until we receive the motion?

Mr. Joël Godin: I can speak, Mr. Chair.

In fact, while we are waiting for Mr. Beaulieu's motion, to make up for lost time, I will make my presentation, if committee members agree.

Would you agree to that, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: On what do you want to give a presentation?

Mr. Joël Godin: On the request made under Standing Order 106(4).

The Chair: The member who made the request is Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Joël Godin: In that case, we'll wait.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, I'm being indulgent, but I really need something specific.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I would like to clarify something.

A motion requesting that the committee have 12 meetings has been moved. We agreed to hold eight meetings, and we decided that after the eighth meeting we could discuss extending the study if necessary. That's what we agreed to.

So I don't understand why we called a meeting today under Standing Order 106(4). I hope my colleagues will be able to explain that. We also agreed on a motion which—

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I can't answer that since we are still waiting for the written motion. My colleague has to abide by the same rules.

The Chair: I will consider what Mr. Serré said as being comments.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I don't think we established a moment when we could—

The Chair: Let's take a few moments to read what Mr. Beaulieu's motion says.

I will suspend for a few minutes.

• (1700)

(Pause)

• (1704)

The Chair: We are resuming our deliberations.

I will read out Mr. Beaulieu's motion:

That, in accordance with item 5 of the motion adopted on December 1, 2022, the committee extend the duration of its clause-by-clause study of Bill C-13 by the number of meetings necessary to consider and debate any amendments that committee members wish to propose.

I will give the floor to Mr. Godin, and then we'll come back to Mr. Beaulieu.

• (1705)

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What I wanted to say a little earlier is that this process was undertaken to show how important it is for us to do good work at the Standing Committee on Official Languages, in the interest of making this bill a historic one which will stand the test of time over the next 25 years.

Between my colleague Mr. Beaulieu's proposal and the one calling for two additional meetings, there is some leeway. I think that we can find common ground for the benefit of both official languages.

I will let others speak to Mr. Beaulieu's motion. After that I would like to propose an amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Drouin, you have the floor, and then we'll come back to Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I would like to remind the committee that, if the preliminary study had been done, we would not be in this mess which started almost a year ago, but that's another story.

Mr. Beaulieu's motion calls for extending the duration of the clause-by-clause study of Bill C-13 by the number of meetings necessary. I don't understand. Is he suggesting we hold meetings indefinitely? Can he give us an idea of what we can expect?

The last time, we agreed unanimously on eight meetings, after which we would see if it was necessary to add more. However, if we agree to hold a number of necessary meetings, that means we could debate every amendment for hours on end. It would be endless.

So I would like to get a clarification from Mr. Beaulieu.

I would also like to hear the amendment Mr. Godin wants to propose. He seems to be the master of ratification and a reasonable person.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I'm not trying to drag this out indefinitely. That said, I feel like people took a long time because they didn't want us to get to clause 54 about applying Bill 101 to federally regulated private businesses. I dropped a number of our amendments, all the minor ones, so we could move faster.

The goal is not to drag this out so that the bill doesn't pass. I agree that it needs to pass. At some point, we have to move forward.

However, if we set a very specific number of meetings, I feel like people will stretch out the debate to make sure we never get to clause 54.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Mr. Drouin, for calling me a good mediator. I have been one in the past, but at that point the opposition parties worked well with the governing party.

I would like to introduce an amendment. In terms of the wording, Mr. Chair, I will draft it with you. I want to reflect my intentions. The people who have the expertise, like the legislative clerks and Madam Clerk, will likely be able to help us.

I move that consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, be extended by four meetings. In addition, I move that consideration of clause 54 of Bill C-13 be postponed to the end of clause-by-clause consideration and be subject to debate.

That's my amendment. The purpose is to be able to discuss clause 54, which deals with the Charter, among other things—

The Chair: I'm going to interrupt you, Mr. Godin. We have a procedural issue right away. You need to tell us how you wish to fit your amendment into Mr. Beaulieu's motion.

Would you rather move your motion after we vote on Mr. Beaulieu's motion?

Having said that, I don't want to tell you what to do or point you in either direction.

Mr. Joël Godin: I understand what you're saying about procedure, Mr. Chair. Therefore, I won't move my amendment. I will introduce my motion, which you are now aware of, later on.

The Chair: Thank you for your consideration.

Mr. Marc Serré: On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have the floor, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: The Conservatives know exactly what they're doing. They are well aware of procedure. So, playing games like this, it's a real farce.

We already have a motion before us—

• (1710)

Mr. Joël Godin: On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Serré—

Just a moment.

Mr. Joël Godin: On a point of order.

The Chair: Just a moment, please.

Mr. Marc Serré: What they're doing is irresponsible.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Please, Mr. Serré and Mr. Godin—

Mr. Marc Serré: This is incredible. It's irresponsible.

The Chair: I hear you, but I'd like to hear you when I give you each a turn to speak. Please, let's stay as—

Mr. Marc Serré: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, can we reestablish order in this committee? It's up to you to assign the floor.

The Chair: That's exactly what I'm trying to do. It's not like I can get out the strap, as we used to say back home in the old days. Have a little respect, everyone, please.

We have Mr. Beaulieu's motion before us, so let's stick with that for now. Mr. Godin has said he is prepared to not introduce his amendment right away and that he will consider it later. So let's stick with Mr. Beaulieu's motion, if we want to move forward, because soon enough it will be 5:30, and we'll have to adjourn.

Mr. Godin, I believe you had a point of order, so you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: I did.

Mr.—

Mr. Marc Serré: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: Mr. Serré, let's speak one person at a time, please.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I would ask that my colleague apologize, because he claimed that those of us from the Conservative Party of Canada had done things when we never did them.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I expect an apology.

The Chair: Can we let the whole thing cool off and resume debate as if nothing happened?

We're in the process of considering Mr. Beaulieu's motion.

Mr. Joël Godin: On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Serré claimed that members from the Conservative Party had bad intentions, and I expect him to take that back. I won't ask him to apologize, but I ask that he take it back.

The Chair: You have the floor, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, everyone involved wants us to move forward with consideration of Bill C-13 as quickly as possible. With that goal in mind, I will therefore withdraw my comments.

The Chair: I am grateful to you, Mr. Serré. Thank you very much.

I'd now like to give the floor to Mr. Beaulieu again.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: The goal is to move forward. I want no part of this game, because it could take a long time.

If need be, I'd be prepared to withdraw my motion so that we could consider Mr. Godin's motion. However, we need unanimous consent to do that.

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent for Mr. Beaulieu to withdraw his motion for the requested meeting pursuant to Standing Order 106(4)?

Does anyone object?

Mr. Marc Serré: No.

The Chair: We have an objection. Therefore, we must debate your motion, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Joël Godin: Excuse me, Mr. Chair. Could you check again for unanimous consent?

The Chair: We don't have unanimous consent, but we must have it to withdraw the motion.

Mr. Joël Godin: Let's wait and see. One of our colleagues is consulting other people in the room about this. That is not what I understood from Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: I just want to understand, Mr. Chair—

Mr. Joël Godin: We must follow procedure, Mr. Serré. You understand procedure, don't you?

Mr. Marc Serré: You're the one who doesn't understand procedure.

The Chair: Mr. Serré and Mr. Godin—

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, to withdraw his motion—

The Chair: One moment, please. The Chair is speaking right now.

The people watching us and those in the room need to hear that parliamentarians respect each other in the situation we have today. Let's stick to procedure, period.

I will ask the question again. Mr. Beaulieu told us that he was prepared to withdraw his motion. To do that, we need unanimous consent. I'm asking the question one last time.

Do we have unanimous consent for Mr. Beaulieu to withdraw his motion?

Before we go any further, I believe Mr. Drouin would like to say something.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I'd like to request a recorded division.

Mr. Beaulieu requested a meeting pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), and now we're withdrawing his motion. This makes no sense.

We're going to vote on the motion he decided to introduce. Then we can move on.

The Chair: Procedurally, we don't have unanimous consent, so we won't revisit this. We therefore have Mr. Beaulieu's motion before us.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I find it really peculiar that we're wasting time like this. We asked that the motion be withdrawn to expedite the process, and now we're asking for a recorded division.

That's what I had to say. I'll let people be the judge of it.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

In reality, we have a motion before us pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), and it should be treated as such.

So let's vote on it.

(Motion negatived: nays 10; yeas 1)

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: I'd like to introduce a motion. Once again, for the wording, I have no ill intent, but I'm asking that my colleagues cooperate to get it worded correctly so that it's compliant and in order.

I move that, in connection with the consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, we extend the consideration time for four more meetings. In addition, I move that consideration of clause 54 of Bill C-13 be postponed to the end of clause-by-clause consideration and be subject to debate before the end of the closure of this clause.

The Chair: Are there any questions about this?

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): First, I would like to say that I support the idea of adding time for consideration. I believe it is necessary.

I am very concerned about what happened before the meeting started. Apparently, I had the necessary equipment and my Internet was working. However, for a reason I do not understand, I was told that we could not continue, which I consider to be completely unacceptable.

I am also concerned about the fact that we wasted time in earlier meetings. First, it was attributed to technical difficulties, and I do believe it was genuine technical difficulties. Second, I believe we wasted time at the initial meetings because of the systematic obstruction on the part of several Liberal members who had their own objectives. I have also expressed concerns about the fact that several government members seemed to be opposed to this bill, even though it was introduced by the government.

That said, I think we have to add time for consideration, but I believe that adding four additional meetings would take us much too far. We have been proposing since November that we finish the study as soon as possible by working efficiently. What concerns me is that adding four meetings would bring us to the end of March. We would then have a two-week break, and we would come back for the rest of April. As we know, there would not be a lot of time left to pass this bill as soon as possible.

We therefore believe that four additional meetings is far too much. We agree on adding two. However, I would specify that it will have to be two full meetings, with no technical difficulties interfering with meeting time.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague Ms. Ashton for her comments. I very much sympathize with her about the technical difficulties she experienced. I know she was not responsible. Her equipment and her Internet connection were as directed.

However, I would like to clarify one point. The eighth meeting will be held on Friday morning. Another one-hour meeting was already scheduled. We have to add to that the hour and a half that we have lost here. So we are talking about a second meeting, plus a quarter of an hour.

Ms. Ashton is asking for two additional meetings, but do those two meetings include all of that?

That's what I would like to know, Mr. Chair.

• (1720)

The Chair: Ms. Ashton, can you clarify that point?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Yes, the Friday meeting was already scheduled. Since the goal is to add time for consideration, we are proposing that two full meetings be held during the week when we come back, the week of March 20, on the Tuesday and Friday.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, I want to make sure I am understanding correctly. This is the end of the day on Tuesday. On Friday, we will have the eighth meeting. Tuesday of the week after the...

The Chair: No, the eighth meeting is today.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: There is an extension, because we lost...

The Chair: That's what I was saying before. This is the eighth meeting, already. Had it not been for the technical difficulties, it would be ending today, but we have all agreed, unanimously, to extend the meeting by one hour at the next meeting, to recover the time we lost.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, so that we understand clearly, can you tell us how many meetings would be left under Ms. Ashton's proposal, starting on Friday, when today's meeting ends?

The Chair: Mr. Godin, even though it is a meeting requested under Standing Order 106(4), we are in a normal meeting. Today is the eighth meeting, which will be extended by one half-meeting, this coming Friday.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We are not in a meeting...

The Chair: That is why I clarified the situation just now, to make sure that everyone understood. Today is the eighth meeting, but there were technical difficulties...

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I have a point of order.

The Chair: You have the floor, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: A meeting requested under Standing Order 106(4) is an emergency meeting. It isn't considered to be a meeting that is part of the clause-by-clause consideration.

The Chair: It's an addition to a normal meeting.

Mr. Serré, you have the floor.

Mr. Marc Serré: I just want to properly understand what is being proposed. If we hold the eighth meeting on Friday and we then hold the two other meetings proposed by Ms. Ashton, that would make a total of three meetings after the one today.

Is that acceptable?

The Chair: Mr. Rayes would like to speak. We don't have him here often, so let's listen to him.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): I just wanted to know whether I was entitled to speak even though I am not an official member of the committee. I just want to make a comment.

The Chair: Like any member of Parliament, Mr. Rayes may address the committee, unless the committee objects. Obviously, he is not signed into the committee.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Be quick!

Some hon. members: Ha, ha!

The Chair: You have the floor, Mr. Rayes:

Mr. Alain Rayes: So I have the committee's consent to say a few words. It won't be long, because I get the feeling that I will not have an opportunity to introduce my amendment. I am just going to make a comment.

I have been listening to the discussion for a while and I would first like to thank the members of the committee for their work. Everyone knows how important this bill is for francophones everywhere in Canada. I sincerely hope you will find a solution so you have more time and so that some extremely important amendments can be debated, like the ones about the language clauses that have been called for by all francophone advocacy groups in Canada. In fact, I will have an amendment to propose on that subject, but there will be others.

As an independent MP who is not taken any side on this subject, I ask that you find a consensus for extending this meeting by more than an hour. Everything possible needs to be done for francophone and anglophone minorities and for this bill to be satisfactory and for it to be possible to pass it officially in the House of Commons and then the Senate.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rayes.

Before going any further, in order to get out of this impasse, I propose that we talk instead about a number of hours. A meeting normally lasts two hours. So two meetings are equivalent to four hours, not counting any technical problem that might arise. Because there are only six minutes left before the meeting adjourns, could people unite around a quick proposal?

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

• (1725)

Mr. Joël Godin: To summarize, we had set aside an hour for the ninth meeting and we have lost an hour and a half today. That makes two and a half hours. Then there is a proposal to add four meetings. Ms. Ashton is proposing two meetings. Two meetings equals four hours. Four hours plus two and a half hours makes six and a half hours.

Can we agree on seven hours or, at a minimum, six and a half hours? Is that compatible with Ms. Ashton's proposal?

The Chair: By your calculation, it's actually four and a half hours.

Mr. Joël Godin: No, it's two two-hour meetings.

The Chair: That's true, it's two meetings of two hours each.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Godin's proposal is acceptable, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: It seems to me that a meeting requested under Standing Order 106(4) can take place outside a normal meet-

ing. So we don't have to consider it, as you have chosen to do, to be a normal meeting.

The Chair: I didn't choose it, Mr. Beaulieu. That is how it works, according to the comments we have heard.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I am told that a meeting requested under Standing Order 106(4) can take place outside a normal meeting. It is an emergency meeting. So it should not be considered to be a normal meeting. If we consider that there was an hour and a half left, to finish the eight meetings scheduled before the initial motion, and we add two meetings, that makes four meetings.

The Chair: If I understand Mr. Godin's calculation correctly, we are talking about adding three and a half meetings, if there are no technical problems.

Is that right, Mr. Godin? Are we talking about adding six and a half hours?

Mr. Joël Godin: In fact, I proposed seven hours, but my colleague is saying six and a half hours.

We need to verify with Ms. Ashton whether that achieves the objective of her amendment.

The Chair: The committee can do whatever it wants in terms of unanimity.

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I completely agree with the six and a half hours.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Chair, I just want to be sure of something. We have not yet seen the motion.

Has it been circulated? If so, that's fine.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I can agree to us having four more meetings, but what is important is that we be able to debate clause 54.

The Chair: We are not talking about the same thing, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: If there are four meetings, but we do nothing to make sure that clause 54 is considered, we will not be able to do it, and the opposition parties that support the application of Bill 101 to federal businesses will not be able to get that done.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you have the floor. Please be brief.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Chair, in fact, my colleague is right.

In the motion I am proposing, I refer to clause 54. Ms. Ashton's motion refers to the number of meetings, but she says nothing about clause 54. After adopting her amendment, we can vote on the motion, which will provide for fewer meetings, in accordance with Ms. Ashton's motion. Then, clause 54 will be considered, and if people want to vote in favour, they will do so. If they want to vote against, they will do so.

We shall see who wants to talk about clause 54.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, I'm going to make sure we are talking about the same thing. We are talking about six and a half additional hours in addition to debate on section 54 at the end.

Is that what you are proposing?

Are there other comments on this subject?

Ms. Ashton, you have the floor.

Ms. Niki Ashton: On this point, my support is for the six and a half hours.

In terms of procedure, I don't know how that affects specific clauses. Obviously, we know that it's an important clause.

I think we need to add hours in order to complete our consideration at this point.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Niki Ashton: That is why I have proposed this amendment.

The Chair: Does everyone understand what Ms. Ashton just said?

Mr. Godin, we are not talking about the same thing.

If there are no further questions, I will call the vote.

Mr. Marc Serré: I just want to understand something. We are now voting on Ms. Ashton's amendment.

Is that right?

The Chair: I will repeat.

We have to start with the vote on Ms. Ashton's amendment, which proposes to add six and a half additional hours, nothing more.

• (1730)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I want to see the motion. We haven't seen it.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Chair, I have something to say.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Michelle Legault): Mr. Chair, Ms. Ashton could read her version of Mr. Godin's motion.

The Chair: Ms. Ashton, could you tell us what your amendment says so it is clear for everyone?

Ms. Niki Ashton: What I proposed is to add six and a half hours.

I think we are not at all agreed on the four full hours.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Joël Godin: In fact, Mr. Chair, I would like to ask my colleague Ms. Ashton to amend her amendment, if procedure permits, for it to be six and a half hours and that at the end of the six and a half hours we provide for debating clause 54.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: At this point, I will support the decision.

The Chair: It is past 5:30. Before going further, is there unanimous consent to continue for two more minutes in order to finish the discussion on this point?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: Fine.

In that case, we are adding two minutes, at the most, and we will then adjourn the meeting.

First, we have to consider Ms. Ashton's amendment.

Correct me if I'm wrong, Ms. Ashton.

Ms. Ashton is proposing to add six and a half additional hours for debating the remaining clauses. That's all. If I have understood correctly, there is no mention of postponing the consideration of clause 54 of Bill C-13 to the end.

Is that it, Ms. Ashton?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Yes, the important thing for me is adding hours.

The Chair: You have the floor, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We are going to vote on the amendment to amend Mr. Godin's motion.

If his motion says that we have to deal with clause 54, we are going to vote on that.

Am I mistaken?

The Chair: Ms. Ashton's amendment leaves out that part of Mr. Godin's motion.

Mr. Godin's motion is corrected by Ms. Ashton's amendment.

Mr. Joël Godin: In part.

The Chair: Yes, that's right.

If everyone agrees, we can move on to the vote.

Madam Clerk, please proceed with the vote.

Mr. Joël Godin: Forgive me for interrupting, Madam Clerk, but before voting, I want to be quite sure.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We are voting, but we don't know on what.

We haven't seen the motion.

Mr. Joël Godin: No, we haven't seen it.

Mr. Chair, I ask that the vote be cancelled and I ask to have Ms. Ashton's amendment. We do not have it in writing.

The Chair: Ms. Ashton, can you provide your amendment, please?

It is being distributed.

I will suspend the meeting for a few moments.

• (1730)

(Pause)

• (1730)

The Chair: Resuming the meeting.

I'm sorry, but the voting procedure has been started and we have to finish the vote.

Mr. Godin, I clearly stated what we were going to vote on: that it was about adding six and a half hours, as Ms. Ashton was proposing, and leaving out the reference to postponing consideration of clause 54 back and debating it. That part of your motion will not be dealt with. That is exactly what I had explained, and we can present motions or amendments of this kind during a meeting

The vote has been called, and we are going to continue with it.

• (1735)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: How does that remove the part about clause 54? It doesn't impinge...

The Chair: It is what Ms. Ashton told us. It is what her amendment proposes.

It leaves out clause 54, but it adds six and a half additional hours.

I have explained it clearly. We could look at the blues.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: It changes the meaning of the motion.

The Chair: That is the purpose of an amendment.

Let us continue the vote, Madam Clerk.

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Clerk, I find this quite unfortunate, but I am obliged to vote against the amendment.

Ms. Ashton, don't take it personally.

The Chair: Fine.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

Mr. Marc Serré: I would like to speak, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have the floor, Mr. Serré.

Mr. Marc Serré: I would like to ask the clerk to read what we have just voted on.

Mr. Joël Godin: We would just like to be sure.

The Chair: Fine.

Please give me a minute. Then Mr. Beaulieu will have the floor.

I would point out to committee members that it is possible to propose amendments in this way during the meeting. It is permitted.

Before handing the floor to Mr. Beaulieu, we will hear from Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: This is what I understood.

That, in relation to the consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts: (1) The committee proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill for a duration of 6.5 hours of meeting, at a frequency of two meetings per week.

The second part of Mr. Godin's motion is not addressed.

Essentially, it is stricken out in this version.

The Chair: Mr. Beaulieu, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Now that we have adopted Ms. Ashton's amendment, I would like to present another motion.

The Chair: Please repeat what you're asking me, Mr. Beaulieu.

I would like to adjourn the meeting, but...

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I would like to propose an amendment.

The Chair: Are you talking about a subamendment?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: No, I'm talking about an amendment.

The Chair: No.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: So, it's a motion.

The Chair: We are talking about the main motion right now.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We are talking about Mr. Godin's motion, which has been amended.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: I would like to propose an amendment.

The Chair: Fine.

Because we have gone past the time for the meeting to end, I am going to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Do you mean you are going to suspend the meeting?

The Chair: No, I am going to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: We are going to pick up where we left off.

Is that right?

The Chair: We are going to pick up exactly where we left off.

Does everyone agree?

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Fine.

The Chair: Perfect.

The meeting is adjourned.

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