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Chair: The Honourable Bardish Chagger





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• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 35 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The committee is meeting today to continue our review on the House of Commons virtual hybrid proceedings provisions, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022.

Our first panel consists of representatives from legislatures and Houses in other jurisdictions. We have witnesses from the U.K. House of Commons, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Parliament and the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

The government House leader will join us in the second panel.

I would like to remind all members, as well as witnesses, that all comments should go through the chair.

I understand that everyone who is joining us online has undergone the pre-meeting connectivity audio test.

Before starting with our first panel, I want to get the draft study budget that was distributed to committee members last week approved. Are there any concerns with the draft budget that the clerk sent around?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I would like to welcome the witnesses. From the House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, we have Matthew Hamlyn. From the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, we have Speaker Nathan Cooper. From the Scottish Parliament, we have David McGill. From the Welsh Parliament, we have Siwan Davies.

We will start with Speaker Cooper, please. Welcome to PROC.

**Hon. Nathan Cooper (Speaker, Legislative Assembly of Alberta):** Good morning, Chair, and thank you very much for having me this morning. It's a great pleasure and honour this morning to be with you, as well as the rest of the committee and of course the other panellists.

I hope to briefly describe this morning some of the steps we took in Alberta to ensure that the Alberta assembly could meet safely, yet continue its parliamentary business during the pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic, the assembly did not adopt a hybrid or virtual Parliament. Instead, the assembly increased its sitting days during the pandemic as compared to previous years. As well, the assembly moved for a brief period of time to an opportunity for members to vote remotely, but that was only for recorded divisions.

The assembly had just begun its second sitting on February 25, 2020. The budget was introduced two days later, on the 27th, and the legislative committees had undertaken the initial steps, or the first week of the main estimates process, when the first presumptive case of coronavirus was reported in Alberta.

Following a constituency week, the session resumed on March 16, and the night before—a Sunday night, I might add—the government announced the immediate closure of schools, and, within two days, a public health emergency. Immediately the assembly took steps to ensure that the necessary protocols were put into place for the sitting to continue and do so in a safe manner.

The immediate priorities of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta involved adapting rules through the passage of a temporary standing order amendment by the way of government motion to allow for the following: a revised budget process; new chamber protocols to accommodate new public health requirements, which included social distancing, which in turn were facilitated by a motion that was adopted to allow members to sit, speak or vote from any location inside the chamber; and flexibility in terms of extending the period of adjournment and also potentially allowing the sitting to proceed past the prescribed hours, including sitting on Fridays or through the weekend, as well as the introduction of a revised sessional calendar. Consideration of the main estimates was transferred to a committee of supply that went on to consider the remaining nine ministries that had yet to be reviewed.

The pandemic certainly challenged the legislature to solve the puzzle of how best to conduct its business during a public health crisis. We all know that different jurisdictions took different approaches during this time. I think that many Alberta legislators, especially those on the government side, believed that they had a duty to be in the chamber to show the public they were on the job during the emergency and were also governing.

I'm of the opinion that it increased the ability of private members, in particular the ability of members of the opposition, to hold the government to account, and as such to provide the individuals they represent with the best possible oversight, which only in-person sittings can provide.

Throughout the pandemic, social distancing and other public safety health measures were considered and were observed in the chamber. Temporary changes to the standing orders and the rules were brought in to allow greater flexibility in the schedule of the assembly's business.

It was interesting to see what happened in Alberta. Unlike other Canadian jurisdictions, where the number of sitting days was reduced, in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, we sat more following the declaration of the pandemic than in other jurisdictions. The assembly, in fact, sat more days than it would have otherwise sat if it had stuck to its original calendar.

The Legislative Assembly of Alberta was one of the few jurisdictions across Canada that sat regularly during the first wave of the pandemic. The assembly sat for a total of 41 days in the first six months of the fiscal year; historically, the average for spring sitting was closer to 30 days.

While it's important—

• (1105)

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

**Hon. Nathan Cooper:** Go ahead.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We look forward to hearing more about what you have to say during the question-and-answer period.

We will now move to Matthew Hamlyn. Welcome to PROC.

**Mr. Matthew Hamlyn (Strategic Director, Chamber Business Team, House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland):** Thank you very much, Chair.

This is my second appearance before the committee. I came here in April 2020, when we had just started the hybrid proceedings in the U.K. House of Commons, so I won't describe all that again. I thought it might be of interest to the committee to know what we've done since then, as I know you are looking at the legacy of the hybrid or COVID-related proceedings.

In the U.K. House of Commons, we finished all remote participation by members in July 2021. We finished remote participation by members in committee meetings at the same time. The House of Lords has continued with remote proceedings by a small number of members on health or disability grounds, but that is a very small number, in the very low double figures.

Select committees have continued, as I say, with in-person sittings since then, but we've noticed a significant increase in the numbers of witnesses appearing remotely at panels like this. That's, I think, a very significant legacy of our COVID-19 period.

In many cases, more than half of the witnesses are now regularly appearing remotely, and that's actually been to the convenience of committees. It's been easier to pull together panels from a different part of the country or over the world at shorter notice. It's also made it easier for witnesses to appear without having to come all the way to London to appear in person. That's probably increased the range of the kinds of people who are giving evidence to committees. That's a bonus.

The only other significant change in our proceedings that's lasted since the pandemic period is in the way we record the names of MPs voting in divisions, which we used to do by—

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** On a point of order, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

**Mr. Matthew Hamlyn:** I'm sorry. I'm stopping there, because I was interrupted—

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Marie-Hélène.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Madam Chair, I am very concerned about the health of our interpreters and right now we are told that it is difficult to interpret.

**The Chair:** I was told that the sound tests had been done.

Can we do another sound test?

[*English*]

When I'm speaking, is it okay?

There is no interpretation. The sound quality is not good on his end.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Madam Chair, it's not because I have an opinion on our study. It's really because I care about the health of interpreters.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm just going to limit our time on this conversation.

I'm not sure, Mr. Hamlyn, if it is the mike being too close or just the quality of your headset, because this is a conversation we're having in Canada. In Canada, we have two official languages. Speaking two official languages on a regular basis is a common practice, and that's not something that many other jurisdictions experience. Interpretation is just part of the way we operate.

Can you try moving your microphone a little bit further from your mouth? Let me see if that helps or not. Are you able to turn your microphone up?

**Mr. Matthew Hamlyn:** I can try both these things. I've never had this problem before, so I'm sorry.

I've turned the microphone up as far as it can go.

**The Chair:** Would you take the microphone and move it between your nose and your top lip, just so you look like a pilot properly?

**Mr. Matthew Hamlyn:** Like that?

**The Chair:** Yes. Tell me how the weather is. Tell me how your day goes.

**Mr. Matthew Hamlyn:** My day was going fine—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Matthew Hamlyn:** —until about now.

**The Chair:** Welcome to Canada.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Matthew Hamlyn:** I'm extremely sorry if I'm causing trouble for the interpreters.

**Mr. Matthew Hamlyn:** One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10.

**The Chair:** No, no—it's not you; it's us. I want us to continue having a good day, so we're going to continue with your comments. I will give you back your time.

Mr. Hamlyn, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Matthew Hamlyn:** Thank you very much, Chair.

I'd almost finished my introductory comments, which were quite limited. I was just going to mention changes in the way in which we record MPs' names when we have votes.

Our traditional method was for MPs to file through division lobbies and for their names to be recorded by staff members. We stopped doing that during the pandemic, for obvious public health reasons. Members instead now record their names on pass readers using their security passes, which capture their names and automatically import them into our divisions administration system. That generates the list of names, which we then publish after each vote.

That has had quite a few technical advantages. That's the main technical legacy as far as chamber proceedings are concerned, which are otherwise completely back to normal.

I'll stop now.

• (1115)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for those comments and for sharing those insights.

Now we'll move on to David McGill. Welcome to PROC.

**Mr. David McGill (Clerk and Chief Executive, Scottish Parliament):** Thank you very much, Chair.

I want to address my remarks today to the future of hybrid proceedings in the Scottish Parliament, and I hope the committee finds this useful.

Since I last spoke to the committee in 2020, our procedures committee has conducted an inquiry into the future of hybrid proceedings, and that inquiry was bookended by two chamber debates, one at the outset to help inform the remit and one on the publication of its report last month.

The main headlines of the report were that the hybrid facility should be retained indefinitely, partly to ensure the resilience of parliamentary business and partly to allow members to participate when they're unable to be physically present in the chamber; that the commitment to hybrid proceedings should make the Parliament more inclusive and encourage a wider diversity in candidates to become members; that the Parliament should commit to continual improvement of hybrid infrastructure and technology to support hybrid

meetings and support a culture of iterative change and innovation; and that a pilot of a proxy voting system should be launched.

Despite the support for the retention of hybrid proceedings, the committee noted the general feeling that it's preferable for members, and especially ministers, to be present for proceedings, and also that the vast majority of our contributions are already physical ones. On that basis, it decided against having a system for seeking permission to remotely enter into proceedings involving set criteria. The committee strongly supported views that physical participation facilitates better collaboration and better scrutiny, but as physical participation was already the norm, it believed that other benefits could be achieved alongside that default way of working by retaining the hybrid facility.

The committee's—and ultimately the Parliament's—support for retaining hybrid was in part based on a vision for the future. In making its recommendations, the committee felt that the Parliament would be out of step with the rest of society if it didn't embrace change and simply reverted to pre-COVID ways of working. It also took the view that future technology would likely support more optimal participation in parliamentary business and that completely abandoning hybrid now would inhibit and restrain the development of technology in that direction. Finally, the committee took a strong view that retaining hybrid would allow Parliament to engage with people in the way in which they are engaging in their everyday lives.

That's not to say the committee wasn't cognizant of the potential downsides of hybrid participation in parliamentary business. As mentioned, it felt that hybrid does not replicate in-person participation, considering that the dynamic in parliamentary debate is altered and informal contacts between parliamentarians are reduced. That being the case, the committee suggests that the impact of hybrid should be monitored over the longer term, particularly in regard to the extent to which it supports equal participation and promotes diversity.

Our next steps, in line with the committee's call for continuous improvement, are to roll out a new platform that supports remote intervention in debates and to launch a pilot of the proxy voting system.

On the former, I expect that to happen next week, and that the platform will enable interventions both to and from the physical and virtual space and therefore reintroduce some of the dynamic that is lost in remote participation in debates.

On proxy voting, the committee is currently consulting on what the scheme should include, with a view to launching a 12-month pilot in the near future.

As things currently stand, therefore, the Scottish Parliament is, to all intents and purposes, now a hybrid Parliament, albeit one in which the vast majority of contributions are made in person rather than remotely.

I'll leave my remarks there. I hope that helps the committee. I'll be happy to answer any questions that members have.

• (1120)

**The Chair:** We look forward to hearing those answers. Thank you.

I'd like to welcome Siwan Davies. The floor is yours.

**Ms. Siwan Davies (Director of Senedd Business, Welsh Parliament):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, everybody, from Cardiff, Wales.

Since my last appearance at the committee was in 2020, I'm going to outline the experience of the Senedd in virtual proceedings in terms of what we currently do, how we do it and why.

In terms of what the Senedd is doing, the chamber proceedings are now fully hybrid—that's a permanent position going forward—and voting is by a remote voting app that was designed in-house.

Our committees have a choice: They can determine for themselves if they meet physically, in hybrid or virtually. I'll remind you that the Senedd is, like the Canadian Parliament, a bilingual institution. We operate through the mediums of English and Welsh, so our physical, hybrid and virtual proceedings are all translated.

How do we do this? Like yourselves, we have a licensed version of Zoom that is incorporated with our broadcast and web-based technology. We're digital by default, so since its inception, the Senedd has had electronic voting and electronic papers, and that has continued. We have no legal or procedural barrier to participation not being physical, so that has always enabled us to meet as a virtual or a hybrid entity.

In terms of the why, initially, as with many other legislatures, it was the requirement of the pandemic and the public health requirements that drove us to have virtual and then hybrid participation. We were the first U.K. legislature to meet virtually during the pandemic to continue our proceedings. As in Scotland, we've had a review by one of our committees of future virtual participation.

The views were in support, but in terms of the pros and the cons, the pros were in relation to the accessibility and the inclusivity of virtual proceedings, particularly around diversity of witnesses and also future diversity of parliamentary candidates; being family-friendly in terms of balance with caring responsibilities of members; better use of time in constituencies; and a cost benefit in terms of savings on travel and reducing the carbon footprint.

The downsides of virtual participation were found to be some aspects of the quality of debate, particularly around the ability to scrutinize legislation and ministers in committees on a virtual basis, and also a debate around whether ministers should have the right to attend virtually or if they should be required to attend in physical form.

We hope that we have a new way of working here that is the best of both worlds. It retains the advantages of a virtual environment but also brings with it some of the advantages of the physical way of proceeding.

I'll finish my contribution by pointing out that we had an election last year in which a third of our membership changed over, so a third of our members have never known any other way of meeting other than either virtually or in hybrid. It's very much around the

way of the Senedd determining its future ways of working as moving forward and learning from the lessons of the pandemic rather than reverting to things as they were before.

Hopefully, Madam Chair and committee, that gives you an indication of where we're at in Wales. We're a hybrid institution by default, with choice for the committees and a fully functioning translation capability throughout all of our proceedings, as is required by statute.

I'll finish there. I'm very happy to answer any questions you may have.

• (1125)

**The Chair:** Thank you for your opening comments and those insights.

We will now start our six-minute rounds with Mr. Nater, followed by Ms. Sahota, Madame Gaudreau and Madame Blaney.

Go ahead, Mr. Nater.

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

Thank you to our witnesses joining us from the various parts of Canada and the world.

I'm going to start with Ms. Davies.

You mentioned in your comments that the Welsh assembly is fully bilingual and has the capability to speak in either English or Welsh. I'm curious whether your interpreters or translators have encountered some of the same issues that ours have here in Canada with regard to health difficulties and various problems. We had an interpreter who was, unfortunately, rushed to the hospital last week after an injury suffered from the interpretation, so I'm curious to know whether you've encountered any similar problems in the Welsh assembly.

**Ms. Siwan Davies:** I'm very pleased to report that no, we have not had any problems at all. When I spoke to the head of translation prior to this session, she wanted me to report that it was a seamless transition here, that we've had no issues at all, and that we've maintained the capability to provide simultaneous interpretation throughout our virtual and hybrid proceedings while at the same time providing our written translation—because, obviously, our documentation is also available bilingually.

In fact, we were used as an exemplar by the Welsh language commissioner in a recent case study as to how organizations in Wales could adopt virtual technology. Whilst we're not subject to the auspices of the commissioner, we wanted to show leadership as a Senedd in terms of how one can operate in a bilingual environment using modern technology. I think it's of great credit to our translation service here and our IT people that they've enabled our Senedd members to continue to meet throughout the pandemic in accordance with our statutory requirements for bilingualism.

**Mr. John Nater:** Thank you for that. Perhaps it would be possible for you to undertake to provide us with some of the technological capacity that exists in the Welsh Parliament. Perhaps we can learn some best practices. If you might undertake to provide us with those details at a future date, in writing, we would very much appreciate that.

**Ms. Siwan Davies:** I certainly can.

**Mr. John Nater:** Thank you.

I want to turn to Mr. Hamlyn. My understanding is that even prior to the pandemic, there was a degree of proxy voting that was available for new parents or for those imminently expecting a child's birth. I believe that in the last little while, that option was extended to include those who were unwell for a longer period of time due to illness or an injury. Can you briefly walk us through how that process, that proxy voting, works currently?

**Mr. Matthew Hamlyn:** Yes, you're quite right. For several years now, MPs who are expecting a baby or whose partner is expecting a baby have had the ability to apply to the speaker for a proxy vote.

It's pretty straightforward. They request it and they don't need to provide medical evidence. We take their word that they're definitely going to have a baby, because there's no reason they would be untruthful about that. The Speaker issues what we call a proxy voting certificate, which is recorded in our formal business papers. It says that a particular member will vote on behalf of another member for a set period of time.

In our voting system, which I mentioned earlier, if an MP is holding a proxy vote for another MP, when they go to vote, they tap their pass and they are invited to vote on behalf of that proxy member as well, so the technology captures that.

**The Chair:** Sorry; I'm going to have to interrupt and ask that the rest of that answer be provided in writing.

Mr. Nater, if you could go to another witness, that would be great.

**Mr. John Nater:** Madam Chair, is this a sound quality issue?

**The Chair:** It is a sound quality issue.

**Mr. John Nater:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Perhaps if I could just follow up with Mr. Hamlyn, he could provide a written response to my follow-up question as well.

You mentioned that it is the Speaker who holds the authority to grant that proxy certificate. I just want to clarify that the whip of the respective parties does not have a role to play in terms of approving or denying that proxy. I see Mr. Hamlyn shaking his head, which is—

**An hon. member:** Yes or no?

**Mr. John Nater:** Yes, the whip does not have a role to play. Is that correct?

**Mr. Matthew Hamlyn:** I think I'd better provide the answer in writing, but the whip plays no role in providing the certificate.

**Mr. John Nater:** Thank you. That's wonderful, and I appreciate any follow-up you could provide in a written response.

Mr. McGill, I want to address a couple of questions to you as well. I understand that your equivalent of our committee, the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, did have a recent report.

One of the points in that report is about where remote access should or should not be undertaken. One of the issues was that constituency business, for example—things that happen in our respective constituencies—shouldn't be undertaken on sitting days unless it's urgent or exceptional in nature.

I was wondering if you could expand on the committee's thinking and the Parliament's thinking on that type of thing. For what types of issues would it be considered appropriate to use remote access, and for what types of issues would it be considered not to be appropriate?

• (1130)

**Mr. David McGill:** Thank you for the question.

As you understand, the committee has stopped short of recommending that there be any set criteria or any rules that need to be complied with, but it did set out its views based on evidence that heard of the likely circumstances that would make it appropriate for people to contribute remotely, and those were around illness, bereavement, parental leave and these kinds of issues. At the moment, they've left that to a kind of self-denying ordinance and have simply expressed their views on the types of circumstances in which it would be appropriate to do that, but their expectation is that the very high levels of physical participation that we have at the moment will continue.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Sahota, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I have a quick question. Is asking Mr. Hamlyn questions not in order at this point?

**The Chair:** I think I'm going to have to say no, it's not, because it just consumes more time, but if you do want to ask Mr. Hamlyn questions, I think it's fair to do so.

Mr. Hamlyn, I regret the inconvenience that this is posing. Your insights are very valuable to this committee. If it is suitable, we would appreciate the answers in writing, and then we can circulate them around. Can you give me a head nod if that's okay?

Thank you for accepting. I will write you a personal card and tell you my appreciation. I am really sorry about this.

Please do ask Mr. Hamlyn questions, but the responses will come in writing.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** My first question for Mr. Hamlyn is this: During the time of the use of the remote application for voting and the hybrid Parliament application, was the U.K. democracy served well? Were members of Parliament and senators able to effectively use those applications, and were the legislation and work of the day getting done through the hybrid provisions?

Next, I think I'm going to move to Mr. McGill. It's going to be easier to have an interaction.

Mr. McGill, I was quite interested to hear that you are starting this pilot next week. Our Parliament here has begun this pilot already and is going to continue until June 2023. I'd love to be able to have our two Parliaments exchange what we've learned. I think a lot of what you said is similar to what we are feeling here as well in terms of not wanting to be out of step with the rest of society, being able to provide options and providing more diversity in Parliament.

I was wondering if you could elaborate a little on other things came out of the debates that occurred in the two chambers. Why is it that the committee has made these recommendations? Do you feel, at the end of this pilot, that you will most likely be moving into a permanent hybrid situation?

**Mr. David McGill:** Thank you for the questions.

I'll just jump immediately to your final question. I think it's highly likely that we will retain hybrid facilities into the longer term. I think we're already going down that track, although the committee has asked for the implications of working in a hybrid way to be monitored in the longer term.

In relation to proxy voting, yes, I'd really welcome sharing information with you on our pilot once it gets up and running. I don't have a start date for that yet, but I would expect it to be up and running in the very near future and to run for 12 months. I think there's a good opportunity here for an exchange between us on that.

In terms of the evidence the committee heard, there was a broad spectrum. The balance of evidence was for retaining hybrid in the longer term for reasons of inclusivity. Just before the last election—we had an election at the same time colleagues in Wales did last year—we had several women who stood down and were critical of the fact that they were finding it very difficult to balance their responsibilities of caring for young families with those of being a parliamentarian. That weighed very heavily on the committee's thinking when it was balancing the evidence it heard.

It was also very persuaded by societal developments and wanted Parliament to keep pace with those, rather than reverting to where it was before. That was all in the context of a very strong view across the piece that parliamentary scrutiny is better served when people come physically together, so there's a balancing act that the committee struck, but we're certainly putting ourselves on a path to being a permanent hybrid parliament.

• (1135)

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Absolutely. I couldn't agree more. I think we're trying to figure out that balancing act here as well.

Would you say that the Scottish Parliament has been served well thus far by hybrid and virtual proceedings? Were you able to effectively carry on with the business of the day?

**Mr. David McGill:** I would say yes.

Like everyone else, I think, we very quickly moved to virtual proceedings. In what were the very early days, it was simply party leaders questioning the first minister of Scotland. We then built on that small start by allowing other members to participate. Then, as

soon as the rules allowed, we brought people back physically, albeit socially distanced. That limited the numbers in the chambers.

One of the things that Parliament was very keen to do was to ensure that every member was able to vote. Prepandemic voting was done using consoles in the chamber. That meant physical participation. We moved as quickly as we possibly could—as did colleagues in Wales—to develop an app that allowed all members, not just those who could be physically present in the chamber, to vote via this app. That was done very much from the point of view of supporting our democracy. There was a very strong feeling that it was just not acceptable for elected members not to be able to exercise the vote that they were sent to the Parliament to deliver.

Those are the kinds of principles that we bore in mind from very early on in the pandemic. I think by and large we were able to make sure that our democracy was as healthy and strong as it could possibly be during the pandemic.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Ms. Davies, has your Parliament been able to keep up with the work—in an adequate manner—that you were doing before the pandemic through the hybrid proceedings you have in place?

**Ms. Siwan Davies:** Yes, it has. To some extent, I think we might say it's even enhanced its ability to do so, particularly with regard to committees and diversity of witnesses. We're able to reach out to people who perhaps would not have the time to attend physical meetings or indeed, as we're doing today, reach out to witnesses who might be in other countries. You're able to reach a bigger audience of people.

I think there's been no diminution of the ability of committees to perform their legislative scrutiny and policy development roles—

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Siwan Davies:**—which is why we've retained the hybrid.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I will say to everyone participating that if you want to expand on answers or provide more information, this committee would welcome that information, through the chair.

Madame Gaudreau, you have up to six minutes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have six questions to ask and six minutes.

Mr. Hamlyn, I will ask you three questions verbally, but I would like to receive your answers in writing.

Why did you permanently establish a hybrid Parliament? I would like to know all the reasons, please.

What are the advantages of conducting parliamentary business in person?

Does a Westminster-style Parliament better preserve the rules of democracy?



I thank you in advance for your responses.

I now turn to you, Ms. Davies. My question is about interpretation. We can compare our situations, as you said at the outset.

Do you have enough interpreters for the work of Parliament?

• (1140)

[English]

**Ms. Siwan Davies:** There are no concerns. We have adequate interpreters to undertake the work. We're able to meet our requirements without any issues of industrial relations. In fact, our recent—

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Just a moment, please.

I have had no interpretation since Ms. Davies began to answer. I am sorry.

**The Chair:** There is no problem.

[English]

Do we have interpretation now? Can you hear the interpretation at the current time?

Madame Gaudreau cannot hear it, but Mrs. Romanado does hear it.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I have selected the French channel.

[English]

**The Chair:** Can we keep speaking to make sure you can hear it?

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I now hear the interpretation.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Romanado can hear it but you cannot.

Can you hear the interpretation now, Madame Gaudreau?

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Now I can hear it.

[English]

**The Chair:** Now you can hear it. That's interesting to note that one system was providing interpretation while another one wasn't.

Ms. Davies, can you start your answer from the top? I will continue the clock.

**Ms. Siwan Davies:** For sure. I was answering to say that we've not had any issues in terms of our resource capabilities for interpretation. We've managed to meet our statutory requirements and we have a very happy workforce in our translation service.

I was just pointing out that in a well-being survey that we undertake every few months, recently our translation service came out at the top in terms of their satisfaction and well-being in the workforce. That goes to show that we have put a great deal of care into ensuring that all of the staff in the centres are able to do their roles, whether it be in a physical, virtual or hybrid environment.

We've managed to meet the needs of the institution and keep our staff safe during the pandemic, and also now ensure that they have adequate resources to do their jobs. However, we haven't increased the resources for interpretation as a result of moving to hybrid.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you, Ms. Davies.

Could we have that survey? It would allow us to isolate some of the things that our Parliament has to deal with. Here, there is a lack of succession. There has been an increase in staffing to meet quality standards, but there is still a shortage.

In terms of connectivity, how good is the broadband? Is this a problem or is everything working well in your Parliament?

[English]

**Ms. Siwan Davies:** We haven't had any issues with connectivity. We've had the periodic issue, as I think you did recently, of the Internet dropping out altogether, and then there's a suspension of proceedings. However, that's been very rare.

In relation to how our interpreters function, if we're having physical or hybrid meetings, they are present in the interpretation booths around the chamber and the committees. If we're having virtual proceedings, then translators and interpreters work from home. We've not had any issues around people's ability to be able to perform their roles. We've not had, as far as I'm aware, any health or—

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you, Ms. Davies. I have just two minutes left and I would like to ask Mr. Gill a question.

Your report seems to say that parameters need to be established to justify remote participation by MPs. As you said at the outset, there are cases such as illness, bereavement or other disruptions.

It says in point 22 that, unless there is an exceptional or urgent situation, constituency work and inter-parliamentary business should be undertaken on days when there is no sitting.

Is the use of the hybrid Parliament at the discretion of MPs or do you have to justify it?

How do things work?

I would like you to give me, in a short time, as much detail as possible.

[English]

**Mr. David McGill:** Sure. I can do that.

It's very much left up to the discretion of members. I think the guidance in the committee's report is really to allow people to challenge that, if they suspect that a member is beginning to overuse hybrid or to use it for inappropriate reasons.

This will all be self-policing, so it's very much an individual discretion about the decision to use the hybrid facility.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Since I didn't get the full interpretation, I'd like to make sure I understood correctly. Did you say it was at the discretion of the MPs, not the government administration or the whip in question? Is that correct?

• (1145)

[*English*]

**Mr. David McGill:** That's entirely correct, yes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Very good.

My next question is for Mr. Cooper, whom I met last summer. I don't know if he remembers me.

I would like to congratulate your assembly, which not only maintained in-person participation, but increased it.

Are you proud of this? What are you most proud of in having maintained in-person participation?

I think we have 30 seconds left.

[*English*]

**Hon. Nathan Cooper:** The thing I'm most proud about is that people—Albertans—I believe had the best access to our democracy as a result of those sittings.

I think the question that we need to ask ourselves isn't just whether virtual sittings are possible, but what the best opportunity is to expose Albertans to our democracy. We have all agreed that—

**The Chair:** That is an excellent question, Mr. Cooper. We look forward to hearing more information, and others are also pondering it, but I have to move on to Ms. Blaney for six minutes.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses, of course, for being here today and for your testimony.

I'm going to go first to Ms. Davies.

First I want to thank you so much for sending us the information about the translation services. It has been a large concern for us in Canada. I think that figuring out the best practices is so important to protect the workers. Thank you so much for sending that to us.

My question for you is really around criteria. We have been having a lot of testimony during the last few weeks on the study of a hybrid parliament and the next steps that we should take. What we're hearing is a general theme of the need for some sort of criteria for who should be able to participate remotely and when.

Can you talk to us about any systems put in place around having specific criteria? Is there any particular role in your House that oversees the criteria? If you can give us some thoughts on that, it would be helpful.

**Ms. Siwan Davies:** In relation to our chamber, there are no criteria. It's a matter for an individual member as to whether to partici-

pate in a physical or virtual form. The expectation is that they're treated equitably regardless of whether they're in the chamber physically or coming in electronically.

In relation to committees, it's a matter for the individual committee to determine collectively how it wishes to conduct its business. For example, if the committee is taking evidence from witnesses who might be in different parts of the country, they may choose to do so virtually. If they're doing a legislative scrutiny, they may choose to come together physically, as it's easier to do so in the room together.

In the main, when committees undertake scrutiny of ministers and accounting officers, they want to do that physically. They impose the criterion of what is best for getting our business done.

In committees, I think individuals will have different views, but as a collective, the chairs are very much of the view that it's for them to determine and not for the Senedd or anybody else to impose upon them, within the broad framework of guidance issued by our presiding officer, which applies both to committees and to the chamber.

I hope that answers your question.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** It does. That's very helpful.

I guess my follow-up question would be this: Is there any method whereby that information is tracked and put out publicly? What I mean is that when you look at our records, for example, you can see how I voted on everything that I did. Is there any tracking methodology that's made available for the public to know if a member is participating remotely or on site in the House?

**Ms. Siwan Davies:** Currently, no. It would just show that a member has participated, spoken and voted. With committees there would be a record to show in what medium the committee was meeting, so they'd be tagged as in person, virtual or hybrid, but it would be very transparent to anybody who was watching the broadcast or watching our Senedd TV to see the medium by which the member was participating.

Something that did come up in the review that the business committee undertook was some unhappiness about voting electronically if one had not been present in a debate at all, but then the counter to that was that this can happen anyway with physical participation. It seemed that some of the arguments being put in favour or against virtual participation equally apply to physical participation. That was something we worked through in terms of members just being cognizant of their responsibilities to be present for a debate if they were going to vote in a debate, or to be present for the entirety of a committee session, for example. That wasn't particular to the virtual or the hybrid.

• (1150)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you for that.

Perhaps I can come now to Mr. McGill.

I understand also that there are no set criteria. Obviously it sounds as though you do have some general ideas of what those might be, but there isn't anything specific.

I know you are doing your 12-month pilot project. Are there plans at the other end of that pilot project to look at these particular things, such as criteria?

Then, of course, I'll add on the question I just asked about. Is there any method within your system of tracking if people are participating one way or another?

**Mr. David McGill:** Thank you.

I should just be quite clear that the 12-month pilot is solely in relation to proxy voting. It's not about hybrid proceedings.

In relation to criteria, yes, you're correct. There are no criteria at the moment, and I don't envisage that ever becoming the case from where we are now; but it can't be ruled out, because the committee has suggested that the overall impact of operating in a hybrid way in the longer term be kept under review. It may be that if there is growing concern that the ability to connect remotely from local areas is somehow being abused, a different view might be taken at some time in the future, but there's no clock ticking on that at the moment.

Sorry; can you remind me about the last part of your question?

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Of course. Is there any way of tracking if people participate remotely or on site?

**Mr. David McGill:** There isn't, no. The one exception to that would be in relation to whether the presiding officer chooses to say something in calling a member. Sometimes you'll find a presiding officer calling a member and saying, "and the member joins us remotely", so that would be there on the record; but there's no other way of tracking whether a contribution is a remote one or a physical one.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I really appreciate the time that you have all taken. We have four witnesses on this panel, and all four are participating within the virtual capacity, which I understand is different from having fewer witnesses. It matters where the translation is happening. This has demonstrated to us...

Mr. Hamlyn, I want to apologize to you for the inconvenience. I really appreciate that you stayed with us to hear what members had to say, and we look forward to receiving some comments back from you in writing, but I offer you my sincere apologies.

To Ms. Davies, I'm going to be asking the interpreters, through the clerk, if the sound quality that they heard from you is different from others, because you have the hybrid capability and you're saying there haven't been many negative instances. I'm going to ask that question of the interpreters.

When they heard Mrs. Davies speaking, was the sound clearer than they heard from others? I can ask a quick question.

I also want to thank Speaker Cooper as well as Mr. McGill for their time. If you want to send anything in writing, please do. We appreciate it.

We'll suspend quickly, and then we will have the second panel.

• (1150) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** We will resume the meeting.

I welcome the witness for the second panel, the Honourable Mark Holland, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mr. Holland, you have the floor.

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Today I am testifying as an individual. However, I am prepared to answer questions as minister.

What I am about to say is very personal, and that is why I will speak in English.

[*English*]

I'm going to have to do this in two parts. I'll wait for the opportunity to say the second part.

I think there's a very important conversation that needs to take place, not just about hybrid but about politics and our business in general.

I don't know why I wanted to enter politics. Each of you will have your own individual story. It started for me when I was six in a sandbox. It might have had to do with my grandfather. My grandfather told me from a very young age that if you wanted to make a difference, you had to know somebody in politics. That's how you got things done. I know that he respected politicians a lot—this was my mom's dad—so I wanted to be somebody my grandfather respected.

Maybe as well it was the very poor relationship I had with my father. My dad was obsessed with becoming big, huge—whatever that meant—and I struggled to get his attention or feel that he saw me.

Maybe it was the fact that I struggled in a household where there was a lot of abuse, that the by-product of that was problems with a sense of worthiness, and that validation could come from seeking public office.

Maybe was part of it, but in the rubble of what I found there was purpose. I have to say that politics for me was a calling that I took extremely seriously. I threw myself into it with everything I had. I listened to my whip when I came in federally. I listened to my party. I went to every event I could go to. I tried to be the best member I could be.

In the process, I failed my family. In the process, I was not the father I should have been. I did not maintain my personal relationships in the way I should have. That's something that I can't take back. When I lost in 2011....

We're going through a very difficult time. When you pass people in the hallways, you see in their eyes the challenges of what they're facing. I see a lot of me, frankly, and how I was struggling in 2010 and 2011.

When I lost, because I had my thrown my entire universe into this enterprise at the expense of, unfortunately, a lot of other things that I should have taken better care of, I was in a really desperate spot. I was told that I was toxic. The Conservatives hated me. No organization would want to hire me. My marriage failed. As I mentioned, my space with my children was not in a good place. Most particularly, my career, my passion, the thing that I had believed so ardently in that was the purpose of my life, was in ashes at my feet.

I'm not proud to say that I made an attempt on my life at that moment in time. That was the genesis for me starting to see my life very, very differently and reframing the choices that I have in my life. I had to reflect in that moment on my own mom, through the course of the abuse that she faced, and her own attempt on her life, and the impact that had on me as a child.

Why do I say all of that? It's because it took a lot in that moment to I guess understand the parable of the spoon, to understand how I had to reframe what I did and to understand the mistakes I had made. I came back to attempt to do things differently, and as whip over a period of three years to see in staff and in MPs the suffering they held and the price they paid to try to serve and to fight for the cause that they believed in.

• (1200)

Look, I'm sure that Hitler worked very, very hard. I'm sure he woke up every morning and he went to every event, and I'm sure that he was in every place that his party told him to be, but at the end of the day, I do not think that our values should stem from that. I think we have to ask a fundamental question, which is when an employee shows up, if they have the opportunity to have their needs met, if they have a good relationship with their family, these people are going to be fundamentally more productive, more creative, more resilient and less corruptible. They'll be in a much better place to serve their community.

I'll finish on this, because you've been generous with your time, Madam Chair.

In Arnold's last speech—Arnold Chan was one of my best friends—he gave a speech about having more compassion for one another and seeing the burden that each of us is trying to carry, seeing that each of us is looking into the darkness of the unknown and attempting on behalf of the communities that we serve and the families that we come from to find answers and to lift people up. If we create a place where people who give more than they take, people who take more responsibility than they give blame, people who....

I'm finishing here. If we're going to create that place that people can come to, this place needs to be more human. It needs to be more compassionate. Hybrid isn't an answer, but I submit that it's a start.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister Holland.

What a time to be talking about being humane, and then I'm just saying, "Sorry; thank you for sharing your words", but I will have to chair this meeting, which I take very seriously as well, and go to our first round.

Mr. Brassard, you have six minutes.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Through you to Mr. Holland, was it your choice to become a member of Parliament?

• (1205)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Absolutely.

**Mr. John Brassard:** See, it was my choice, too, Mr. Holland, and I made the choice knowing that the seat of power in Ottawa was where I needed to be, and that's a choice that my family made. While I sympathize and empathize with the story that you told, back in May, I wrote you a letter, which you did not have the courtesy to respond to, suggesting that there were options available to Parliament that would deal with situations when we needed to be more empathetic and compassionate.

I'll bring you back to a situation. Shortly after you were elevated into your position, you pledged to Joan Bryden, formerly of the Canadian Press, that you would be "irrationally reasonable and logical" and that your job is to find areas of common ground. One of the things that we tried to find was common ground and consensus on how Parliament would work going forward, and in that letter I suggested several things to you, to which you did not respond. One of them was the ability for us to use the Standing Orders to pair, to be able to be empathetic and sympathetic. I'm wondering what your comments are on that.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Thank you, Mr. Brassard.

I thank you for the opportunity to work with you in your time as House leader.

I did make a choice to be here. I tried to give a bit of a colour of where that choice came from and I've tried to comport myself differently over the last seven years. What I seek to do is to encourage others to firmly shape those boundaries in their own world, in their own lives.

You're right: I do, as a guiding principle, try to be irrationally reasonable, so I'll talk for a second about pairing and my friend Arnold Chan.

Before he gave his last speech, it was incredibly painful to see Arnold in the state that he was in, and I do believe, actually, that he would have come to Ottawa despite the fact that he was in the stage that he was in. One of the things that I know about Arnold and that anybody would know about him was that as he was spending his last days on this earth, his duty to the job that he loved and the people whom he served meant that he wanted to be able to do that, so he dragged himself in. I don't know if people remember seeing him in the lobby huddled in a ball trying to sip water to find the strength to drag himself into the chamber—

**Mr. John Brassard:** He did.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** He didn't want to give his duty to somebody else. He didn't want somebody else to represent him in his last days, sir; he wanted to represent himself in the last days he had on this earth, and he did so with dignity.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Under the Standing Orders at the time, Mr. Holland, the pairing option was available to him. Had we agreed and had consensus at that time.... You talk about consensus and the importance of consensus, yet there was no consensus that was made to extend the hybrid session of Parliament for another year. You did an end-around on the official opposition and you did an end-around on the Bloc Québécois and you negotiated a deal with the NDP to ram the hybrid Parliament through Parliament.

You'll have to excuse me on actually believing that there was consensus in this regard; you rammed it through Parliament.

My question to you is this: When did you make the deal with the NDP to have a hybrid session and have that voted on in June? When was that deal made?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Thank you, Mr. Brassard.

In March of 2020, when the pandemic descended upon all of us, we had a meeting at the Board of Internal Economy. I understand you were not the House leader at that time. When we asked how we were going to continue conducting the business of the nation, notwithstanding the fact that we were facing a global—

**Mr. John Brassard:** In June of 2022—

**Hon. Mark Holland:** I'm talking about this—

**Mr. John Brassard:** I'm sorry. I'm attempting to—

**The Chair:** I'm going to pause the time here.

We all know I like to have the meeting run through the chair. You have all asked that you be able to speak among colleagues and so forth. We've just had a conversation about interpreters and their being able to do their work. When we ask a question, we should provide some opportunity for the answer. This is not a courtroom; this is a committee having a very important conversation.

Either let's start going through the chair or let's be able to take our turns and have the dialogue we need to have.

I'll start the clock—

**Mr. John Brassard:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Through you—

**The Chair:** No. To finish the answer, we'll go to Minister Holland.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to say to Gérard Deltell, Peter Julian and Alain Therrien, who were the House leaders at that time, that we were, in a remarkably short period of time, able to come to a consensus on a hybrid model.

What I said was that during a pandemic, we needed to be able to have a hybrid model so that we could do our business, and at the conclusion of that, there needed to be a study by PROC on the use and utility, or lack thereof, of those hybrid provisions. That is what this committee is about today. That is the decision that this committee will make, and I look forward to its continued deliberations.

• (1210)

**Mr. John Brassard:** Through you, Madam Chair, the decision to extend the hybrid setting.... Several times, you referenced the po-

tential of a new variant as your reason and rationale for extending that, and having some certainty in September.

What did you base that on? What scientific evidence or health-related evidence did you base that on, given the circumstances that we're in today? We're not seeing an increase in variants, yet here we are in a hybrid Parliament.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** If you recall, as we headed into the session last year in September, a year ago, I indicated that there was the possibility of variants and that Parliament needed to remain flexible in the wake of that possibility. Very unfortunately, we got hit by omicron, and omicron shut down Parliament again. It forced us once again, not only in this Parliament but across the country, to return to a state of lockdown in our homes. In fact, most of us spent last Christmas—and I certainly hope it's not the case this Christmas—having to celebrate outside and meeting relatives outside.

That was the state of the world at that point in time. I sincerely hope that we don't face that again. I think we're using these provisions responsibly now.

I am not clairvoyant. I can't tell you whether there will or won't be another variant. It's my sincere hope there will not be, but these provisions are important to maintain flexibility in the event of another public health crisis.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Fillmore.

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister.

You spoke plainly and beautifully about the challenges that you have faced and that all of us face at some point during our time here.

I think you had more to say, so if you would like to take some time to add to what you've told us already, I would very much welcome that.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Thank you, through you, Madam Chair, to Mr. Fillmore.

I think the only thing that I'll add, because I tried to get my comments in at the beginning—and I thank the indulgence of the chair for that—is this notion of pairing. Perhaps I could address that directly.

I don't know how I'm going to meet the end of my life. I don't know when I'm going to meet the end of my life. This is an example. Let's take the most extreme example.

This committee heard testimony from Dona Cadman. This committee heard testimony from Jean Yip. In that testimony, you heard about people who weren't interested in neglecting the responsibility they had to their communities or to the battle they fought their entire lives. I know that each person, as I look at you across the table, is coming here because you're trying to make the community better, the country better, and you're giving with all of your heart. As you face an end-of-life circumstance, the idea that you would pair and give away that last chance to have a voice is not reflective of the people I've seen in that position.

I also would take it one step further, which is that in any state of malady—and you've heard from some members on this—be it a mental health concern, or be it, frankly, not even a malady but a circumstance where.... As I mentioned very directly, there were different moments in time when I should have made a different decision, frankly, about being home when I was told that no, I wasn't allowed to.

Being able to be home in critical moments in your family's life, being able to be there when it really counts for them, and being able to still do your duty that you were elected to do and to be given a little bit of flexibility....

I think of what you've seen as this pandemic has eased. I very much hope that we're facing the end of the kind of circumstances we saw over the previous two years, but I think the learning was that we can afford a little more empathy and compassion for each other's circumstances, that we can afford a little more time. I think we've been able to demonstrate over the last couple of months in the House the appropriate and effective use of these provisions without undermining accountability, and I think that in the process we've been more human. Hopefully, we'll attract other people here, because I think one of the things that we have to think of, regardless of what you think of me or of any parliamentarian, is that we have to care about the future of this place.

We have to care about who walks in these doors, and we need to attract the brightest and the best. Those people need to be able to take a look at those families and say, "I'm going to be able to be there in really critical moments. When times are really tough, you're going to be able to count on me to be there."

In this period over the last couple of months, we've attempted to take very seriously that balance of giving respect and room to members while also adhering to the responsibility we have as a government to remain accountable and present and for members to be able to fully and completely participate in our processes.

• (1215)

**Mr. Andy Fillmore:** You talked about the importance of the happiness of the people who work here, about being fulfilled, about their being able to fulfill their family obligations, and all of those things would make them stronger members, less corruptible members, etc. Can you make the connection between that and what the hybrid session offered for members?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Absolutely, and, through you, Madam Chair, thank you, Mr. Fillmore.

Every poor decision I've made in life came from a place of depletion. It came from a place of not having met my needs and not being full as a person. That's where I've made some of the dumbest mistakes of my life, frankly.

I do not think that we want the people who are serving this nation and making decisions for this country to be in a state of depletion. I think that somebody who is well supported by a strong family and friends, somebody who has a good work-life balance, walks in with a different energy. They are people who are ready to make sacrifices and lift and do hard things.

I would submit that we are facing the most difficult challenges the planet has faced, certainly since the Second World War, and that we need people who are in a position to serve and are ready to serve. Those people need to be in a position where their lives and their needs are attended to, such that they can do the hard work of serving their communities.

**Mr. Andy Fillmore:** Thanks very much.

Let me say this: Sometimes doing the right thing is the hardest thing.

Your role in the context of all the parties' roles in navigating the pandemic and the creation of the hybrid reality that we continue to enjoy was a very hard thing to do. I just want to say that you did it extremely well, and I thank you.

I'll leave it there, Chair. Thank you.

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

At the outset, I commend the testimony that has been given, I welcome the openness and frankness that we have been afforded.

I would also like to point out that I have heard everyone's great desire to be reasonable and to put aside partisan pressure. It is a fact that we are all affected by a decision that the government will have to make after June. I hope that all the testimony we have heard will indeed be heard by all parliamentarians, especially by the leaders of each party. I know that the analysts are going to do an extraordinary job, and I would hope that this testimony will be well taken into account.

I say this because I have no doubt whatsoever about the basis of this proposal, about everyone's full awareness of wanting to do the right things and to do them differently.

In reality, my fellow citizens tell me that, even if I spend time in committee and there will be a report, everything is going to be decided in advance, it is going to be organized in advance. I would like to show them that we are capable of reacting quickly, as we have already done when something serious has happened.

I participated the first time, with my colleague, Gabriel Ste-Marie, in the hybrid mode sessions of the Standing Committee on Finance, and we showed people that we could pivot quickly. This is one of my first appearances on the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I would hope that this will not be shelved and that when a vote is taken, everything will not already have been decided. We have a lot of steps ahead of us if we are to succeed in finding a winning solution.

I must tell you that last year I used the hybrid mode out of concern for my daughter. I stayed with my daughter, who was a prisoner, because she needed special care. I was with her for a week. I had to be in Parliament, but the Zoom application was a perfect tool as it allowed me to work in virtual mode.

Do you know what my daughter said to me? She said, “Mom, this is good, you can work and be with me. I'm suffering now, but I don't feel you're there”. If there had not been a hybrid Parliament, I would not have been able to be at my child's bedside during one of the 26 weeks of parliamentary work. I was able to be at her bedside and today I am grateful for that.

That being said, I don't want to live with regrets. I tell myself that we are capable of finding a solution with respectable and suitable means for the 26 weeks of parliamentary sittings. I would hope that we will become aware of the availability of our resources.

I think we should agree on the three questions we need to ask ourselves. Do we have enough interpreters? Is the quality of our tools sufficient to avoid incidents and accidents? Do all parliamentarians have proper connectivity in their constituencies?

If we don't have these three elements, obviously it's not possible to participate in the sessions in hybrid mode. The Bloc Québécois is not looking for power; it is looking for a solution.

I have just one minute left, but can I hope that there might be a winning solution?

I'd like to hear what you have to say about this.

• (1220)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Thank you very much for your question and your obvious passion in this regard.

Firstly, it is absolutely essential that we find a solution for the interpretation service. It is essential that the evidence from every meeting here in Parliament be available in both official languages. The Board of Internal Economy has made a lot of progress in this regard, particularly with Mr. Alain Therrien, who is an easy person to work with. He is a very reasonable person. He always tries to find non-partisan solutions. I am very grateful to him for that.

Secondly, on the matter of connectivity and technical issues, one has to remember that at every meeting there are witnesses who are present virtually. Even if we did not have a hybrid system, the technical problems of interpreting virtual sessions would exist. This is also a widespread problem in this environment.

I need to find a solution to this problem. I am here with you to find a solution. You are right. There's no doubt about it.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Since I have some time left, Madam Chair, I will add a comment.

What I understand is that we could look separately at some of the things that affect the House of Commons. For example, we know that the presence of every elected official, including ministers, is important for accountability.

Also, we could look at the elements that affect committees. I was not here before, but I know that it was already possible to participate by videoconference. So the technology had already changed and, yes, some witnesses could appear in person.

So, I would hope that these considerations would be compartmentalized in order to make a win-win decision.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** You are absolutely right.

**The Chair:** That's a good answer, thank you.

Ms. Blaney, you have the floor for six minutes.

[English]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you.

Through you, Madam Chair, I thank the witness for his testimony today. It was very personal, and I appreciate and honour that.

I know that all of us around this table probably have stories of times when we would have really liked to be close to our family to support them through very hard moments. I want to recognize that and hope that you're not offended that you are asked questions as a House leader rather than as a serving MP.

We did hear testimony earlier today from the Welsh Parliament that talked about their interpretation. They made it very clear that not only are they seeing the workers really feeling positive about the work they're doing, but that they had just done a well-being survey and, in fact, the interpreters were one of the highest-scoring ones. We know that if we did a similar survey of workers across the board in this place, the interpreters would definitely not have that kind of outcome.

What steps are being taken to address this issue in a more profound way? Interpreters are really struggling. We heard last week that an interpreter was sent to the hospital because of acoustic shock. That is seriously concerning to me. I'm not clear if what the House provides is different from what the Senate provides, but I do recognize that the interpreters work in both places.

I'm just wondering if you could speak to that challenge we're facing.

• (1225)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

To Madam Blaney, thank you.

At the outset, there's absolutely no need to apologize. That's why I'm here. I gave a personal story, not because it's particularly remarkable but just because I think that we all have to share with each other some of the challenges in doing the work that we do.

I don't even speak here just of MPs. I'm speaking of the people who support the House. I'm speaking of folks like interpreters and, frankly, anybody who is in the business of trying to make our democracy function.

Let me speak directly to the question of interpreters. One thing that's important to remember is that there's a shortage of interpreters, and that is a significant challenge. We have interpreters who are in many different parts of the country. That solution, with or without hybrid, will mean that we need to allow those people to work virtually. The only way that we're going to have interpreters is to allow them to stay in their homes. We have a lot of people who are perfectly good as interpreters, but they're saying, "I'm not uprooting my family. I'm not leaving to go to Ottawa." That's fair, and they should have the right to do that.

These issues are going to have to be fixed anyway, because remote interpretation is our future. If remote interpretation is our future, and we don't fix it, then the problems that you're talking about in terms of injury or problems for interpreters are going to continue with or without hybrid. Frankly, I would say that they need to be fixed irrespective of that. I think it's a very poor argument to not proceed.

All that I will say is that I too am very seized with that. The efforts that we're attempting to make at the Board of Internal Economy are very positive. I think there is co-operation that's taking place among parties to find solutions and seek collaboratively to ensure that every member of Parliament has access to interpretation in all of our meetings. It's essential.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you. I hope that the priority is the health and well-being of the people who work for us. As a person who only speaks one language, I could not do this job without them. I just want to recognize that and continue to work towards having them report back to this place that they are very happy and healthy in their work, and we're not there yet.

I want to come back to this idea that you talked about that I do quite agree with.

It's really an MP's right to represent their riding and the voices of their constituents. There are times when you're limited in that capacity. I think back to some of the testimony that we heard, particularly about pregnancy, about people who are pregnant who are not allowed to travel for various health reasons but are still doing quite well. This really opens up the door.

I think we've also had discussions about persons living with disabilities and persons who have different challenges, such as a family crisis that keeps them at home when they are still capable of doing their jobs. Even if you have a serious health issue yourself, you still want to bring your voice forward for your constituents.

I'm just wondering if you could speak to the ability to have choice during some of the hardest physical times of your life, but when you still have energy to expend for your constituents. I think that members have that responsibility. How does a hybrid Parliament make room for that?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Through you, Madam Chair, thank you for the question, Madam Blaney.

I think it's a very important point. I spent three years as whip and I think the overarching lesson I learned in that period of time was that life is hard and that people go through extraordinarily difficult things. When we pass people in hallways, we have no idea what's

happening behind those eyes—the inner world that people are challenged with.

I talk to people who are immunocompromised who say, "I have to represent my constituents. I'm coming in. I don't care that it's putting my health at risk," or I talk to people and I'm not sure their state of mental health makes them quite ready to return, as they have faced either a major trauma or a life event or a health issue, but they want to represent their constituents, so they come in. As was just indicated by our honourable Bloc colleague, perhaps someone has a family member who's in a state of crisis and who needs them to be home for a particular period of time to be with them to make sure that they get strong, and then they can still do their job.

I think we need tools to be able to address that and I think we've been able to demonstrate that we can use those tools responsibly, as we've demonstrated over the last two months.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

I now give the floor to Mr. Berthold for five minutes. He will be followed by Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I remember when you occupied Mr. Holland's position in the House of Commons, Madam Chair.

Mr. Holland, I have several questions for you and I would like you to answer them fairly quickly. This is an important question.

Last week, I had the opportunity to ask three experts about the health of interpreters: should Parliament continue to maintain hybrid sessions at this time, given that we know that every hybrid session causes problems or injuries to interpreters?

The first expert replied as follows:

[*English*]

In my line of work, if it's a matter of convenience versus harm, I always pick no harm with a little bit of extra inconvenience.

[*Translation*]

The second expert said he agreed with his colleague and that there was a duty of care.

The third replied that the answer was clear enough from an ethical perspective.

Who makes the decision to let interpreters continue to do this work, when we know very well that interpreting hybrid sessions is harmful to their health?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Thank you very much for your question.



As I have already explained, this situation is very complicated, because today, even without a hybrid system, witnesses participate in the sessions virtually. Moreover, what is even more important and problematic is that it is very difficult to find interpreters. It is not reasonable to say that interpreters should move to Ottawa.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair—

**Hon. Mark Holland:** On the other hand, it's reasonable to decide that they can do remote interpretation. Yet when they do remote interpreting, the problem persists.

That said, I'm sure we can find solutions.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, that is not the issue.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** I think this is really important.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, we know that, every day, interpreters suffer injuries and that this has consequences for their health. Experts have come to testify to this. Someone in the government decided to maintain the hybrid sessions despite these external opinions.

In terms of what you talked about, Mr. Holland, these are witnesses who were participating in the sessions remotely through broadcast-quality links. These links ensure that they produce good sound. These witnesses had to go to places where there were compressed signals, so there was good sound for interpretation. You're mixing oranges and pears at the moment.

Who in the government made the decision to continue with the hybrid meetings anyway, knowing that interpreters are being injured every day because of this mode of working?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** It's really weird. We are facing a global situation: the pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, we had a meeting with every party, including the Chief Whip and the Leader of the Conservative Party. We chose, at that time, to create a hybrid system. It was a unanimous choice. It was not the choice of the government or one party.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, at that time we did not have the information we have today.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** It was every party's choice. Then, during the pandemic, together with our administration, we created a very effective system to continue to do our work, which is so important.

The reason the committee is here today is to talk about the future and to decide whether or not to continue with the hybrid system. That is now the choice of the committee. It is your choice, Mr. Berthold.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Holland, the employer also has a responsibility. It is not the responsibility of the MPs, but of their employer, to look after health and safety. As a representative of the government, you have to take that responsibility.

Finally, Madam Chair, I would like to ask one more question.

One thing has bothered me from the beginning. It is often said that the hybrid system is intended to help MPs do their job. Yet under this one, MPs are already very privileged. We do not have to claim EI when we take time off for illness. We do not have to claim maternity leave. The rules have even been improved to allow women to take maternity leave. If we are ill, we can stay at home with-

out worrying about how much we will get paid at the end of the week. When we have a health problem, we don't have to ask for permission to be absent. We just have to tell our whip that we will be staying home.

I'm a little surprised that we're talking about giving even more privileges to people who already have privileges that no other profession in the country has.

That was just a comment. I think we can leave it at that.

• (1235)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Berthold. Your comments are always welcome.

I will now give the floor to Mr. Turnbull.

[English]

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** I just want to say thank you, Minister, for your remarks today. As someone who has known you since I got into politics and as your neighbour, I can honestly say that you make this place more humane. I think you have done so today with your testimony, which I found to be exceedingly genuine, raw, truthful, emotional and deeply personal, and I would categorize that in my world as courageous and authentic.

I think that cuts through some of the things that we deal with in this place. It really stands up to the test of time. It will ring true for all of us, and I think it's non-political. I think what you shared today was deeply emotional and personal, and I thank you for that.

I think at the root of what I heard you say was that this place can be more compassionate and empathetic. It has a lot to do with balancing our energy and taking care of ourselves, the idea of self-care, which I think has risen to be an important conversation coming out of COVID-19 and the pandemic, but I think is certainly something that members of Parliament probably shy away from due to their sense of privilege, their sense of duty and the desire to make a difference and serve. I think they shy away from acknowledging that we do have to take care of ourselves.

Could you talk a little bit more about what that really looks like for you?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Through you, Madam Chair, to Mr. Turnbull, thank you for your question and your kind comments.

I was the executive director of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario. When I'm speaking about trying to create better and healthier workplaces, I mean all workplaces. I think every workplace should look at how they can ensure that their employees have what they need to succeed. I attempted to make the argument that treating your employees well and giving them good lives means they are going to be more productive, that they will achieve more, that they are going to get better results.

I can tell you that I spent three terms doing it one way, and now I'm in my third term of doing it a different way. I believe I'm doing a good job. I believe that I'm an effective parliamentarian and an effective minister. I'm able to create those boundaries in my life to ensure that I have the resilience and energy to be effective.

To go back to the question that was asked earlier about our obligation to our interpreters, we have an obligation to all of our employees, to every single person who works here, to make sure that we create a workplace that allows them to thrive.

We're asking people in opposition and government and those who support the House to come here and to transform the country, to soak up all of the anxieties of the country and give them solutions. We're asking them to rise and to give their best. We're asking the best in the country to come and join us here, and if we're not good enough as a government, for better people to come and replace us. For that to happen, we have to create the kind of environment where it's a race to the top and to the best.

With all due respect, I want to stop hearing around this place, after people spend the entire week away from their families, about how you did 14 or 15 events on the weekend. I want to stop hearing about how, in the constituency week, you travelled to every end of the country.

I represent roughly 130,000 people. I was elected for the first time in 1997 and federally in 2004. When I go to town halls and talk to my constituents, they want to know what I delivered and what I got done to make their lives better. They're not interested in whether I went to 17 or 18 events, whether I was or wasn't able to make it home for an important family obligation, or whether, if I was going through a difficult health issue, I had to work virtually at a particular time. They want me to deliver.

What I think they understand, and the relationship I believe I have with my constituents, is that we have mutual trust. Remember that in this place, we are all supposed to see each other as honourable members and use the tools that are given to us honourably. I think we need to show a little trust in one another. We need to show a little compassion and have faith in one another that we will use those tools judiciously.

Folks, we don't have a problem here of people not working hard enough. I'm sorry; if anybody goes to their staff and tells them to get me more hours, work harder, or you're not doing a good enough job, go to hell. The people here in opposition, in government, in House administration—every single one of you—know what you give. You know what you do, and you don't need anybody to tell you that you're not doing enough.

What I find we need to do here is remind people of their personal obligations and to take care of themselves so they don't wind up in the kind of circumstances that I was in a decade ago.

• (1240)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau, you have two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question will be very simple, but I will preface it first. We are among ourselves. How could we get to the point where in committee it is one thing and in Parliament it is something else? I'd like to hear from the government House leader on that.

I am a businesswoman and I use whatever means necessary to make my businesses successful. For example, when I am on the road and have a board meeting at 11 p.m., I may use hybrid mode or Zoom. Also, I represent 43 municipalities, and while I'm here, I may have a little Zoom meeting with a mayor. Indeed, my riding has 43 municipalities and I am here.

That said, I would like to focus on accountability here in Parliament. We sit for 26 weeks. How would a hybrid Parliament work? Committees are excluded. How do you see that today?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Thank you for your question.

I also thank you for the work you do in your riding and throughout Quebec and Canada.

In the past two months, we have had some flexibility and humanity. However, there has also been accountability and we have been able to do our job, not least because of the efficiency of our system.

All debates continue in the House of Commons. In question period, there are very strong questions and answers and it all works well. It's not perfect, but that's generally how life is. We have a responsibility to improve the quality of our workspaces and to ensure that the next generation of MPs will be very strong and creative and achieve a good work-life balance.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** If there are not enough interpreters, due to a lack of succession, will we have to consider the difficult choice of putting hybrid sessions in Parliament on hold?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Witnesses have already explained that there are more interpreters than before. I think there are now more than 30. Since interpreters can work remotely, I believe we can add as many interpreters as are needed to provide a quality of service acceptable to you, to me and to the House of Commons.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Blaney, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you.

My questions will be mostly around criteria. There has been a lot of testimony for the past couple of weeks and a lot of discussion about having set criteria around when people participate remotely and when they are on site.

Interestingly, we just heard from the Welsh and Scottish Parliaments that they continue to have hybrid. They've decided to leave it open without particular criteria. There is definitely a sense, especially from the Scottish Parliament, that there was some sort of general discussion about what that would look like. I know they're talking about having some sort of way—it doesn't sound like they're clear about it yet—or some oversight to check in and see if the system is still working and if accountability measures continue to be there in a meaningful way.

I'm wondering if you have any thoughts on criteria and on how that would be implemented in this case.

• (1245)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Through you, Madam Chair, thank you to Madam Blaney for that question and comment.

I do think that throughout the course of the pandemic, we did a really great job of checking in with each other and seeing what was working and what wasn't. I would say that for the first year, there was full unanimity on that. In the immediate period before omicron, the Conservatives started saying it wasn't needed and that they didn't believe it was necessary. Then, of course, omicron hit, and it was necessary. We had a situation in which it was actually essential that we were at a distance again.

I think we do regularly have to review our practices toward the goal of creating the most healthy, productive and effective workplace that we can possibly achieve. I think a regular review of our procedures and what is and isn't working is wholly and entirely appropriate.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** The last question I have at this time is really around connectivity. We know that it continues to be a challenge for some of our rural and remote communities. I come from a riding where, if I drive 20 minutes out of town, there is no connectivity at all, and no phone. That is definitely a challenge.

I'm wondering if you could speak to that challenge specifically for this country.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** We have a vast country over enormous geography. I think it's one of the massive challenges of trying to govern collectively. We're in a minority government, so let's face it: We all have some responsibility for the governance of this nation.

We are taking very important steps to ensure that broadband is available in every inch of this country. That issue is not only important for Parliament; it's an issue that's important for all Canadians. We have a minister who can speak better than I could to that, but I think we're on the precipice of being able to ensure that reality.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we will go to Mr. Brassard for four minutes.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and through you to Mr. Holland.

From my perspective, I have actually seen what I would consider to be a decline in democracy. We've seen a diminishment in transparency and accountability. I think many Canadians agree with that, notwithstanding your position today.

Mr. Holland, you were a dogged opponent of the Harper government in opposition. What would have been your reaction if Peter Van Loan, Vic Toews or even Stockwell Day had been responding on a computer screen?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Through you, Madam Chair, thank you to Mr. Brassard.

There were two questions there. With respect to the decline in democracy, I think we're all seized with the decline in the quality of discourse and the incredibly aggressive and partisan nature in the way we question each other and interact with one another. For most people watching, it doesn't appear that we're really acting like human beings. We seem to be more interested in our partisan interests rather than being people who are attempting to do our best.

With respect to the specific question, I can tell you that I really wish.... It's one of the reasons I really struggled with the testimony today. I think if somebody had come across the aisle in 2010 and 2011 and had a conversation with me about the way in which I was throwing my entire life and every inch of myself into my career, I would have welcomed that conversation. I would have welcomed a conversation about mental health. I would have welcomed a conversation about alternative ways to work.

I think if that had happened, I don't think I would have gone to the place I went. I would have very much welcomed that conversation.

**Mr. John Brassard:** I will ask you a very pointed question, through the chair. I've been watching the testimony that's been going on at this committee, and it very much feels like a box-ticking exercise, which was my experience when I was the opposition House leader. My whip can attest to that at the time.

This really feels like that situation. It feels like the decision has already been made about which direction we are going in.

Through you, Madam Chair, to Mr. Holland, has an agreement been reached with the NDP to continue with a hybrid Parliament going forward? Have you reached an agreement with them?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** What I can say is that I'm here. From the beginning, I said that it would be a decision of PROC and that it would be a majority decision of the House and the parties to make, but let me say something—

**Mr. John Brassard:** I'll take that as a yes.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** If I could, Madam Chair, because it's an important point, let me give credit to Mr. Deltell in the work that he did in compromising on BillC-3 and BillC-4. What a pleasure it was to work with him, with somebody who was able to do something other than obstruct and be partisan.

Let me say that I'm hopeful that with Mr. Scheer right now—

• (1250)

**Mr. John Brassard:** That's a personal shot, Madam Chair.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** I'm just saying, Mr. Brassard—

**Mr. John Brassard:** That's a cheap shot, because we were trying to work together.

That's okay. I have another question—

**The Chair:** I did not see that as.... I think the point was being made, and I can understand people taking things differently.

Can we let him finish the question so that I can give you your time?

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I have a point of order—

**Mr. John Brassard:** Yes, we all experience things differently, Madam Chair. Thank you.

I have another question, and it's my last.

There are existing tools within the Standing Orders that we can utilize to help make this place function better. We talked about, and you talked about, consensus building. Are you averse to, or would you consider, proposals made by all standing parties in the House of Commons to deal with the issue of utilizing some of those existing Standing Orders in order to facilitate a better-functioning Parliament?

**Hon. Mark Holland:** Always.

**Mr. John Brassard:** That's perfect. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Romanado, you have four minutes.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the minister for being with us today and for sharing his story. I really appreciate his honesty.

One thing we've been hearing a lot about is.... It's one extreme or the other. What we're talking about is hybrid Parliament, and hybrid Parliament is a blend of ways to participate. We are currently under hybrid provisions that go until June of 2023, yet here we all are. Every single member of this committee is physically in the room. The option of how we participate is already available to us.

The point we keep hearing is that if we were to adopt a hybrid model, all hell would break loose and everyone would be at home on their sofa. Could you elaborate a bit on what you're seeing in terms of the physical participation, despite the fact that we have a hybrid model in place right now?

If you could elaborate quickly on that, I have a follow-up question.

**Hon. Mark Holland:** It's a bit bizarre to me, because over the last two months we have enjoyed a hybrid model and an eased pandemic situation. We're not totally out of the pandemic, but we're in an eased situation. We've seen how these provisions can work and how accountability continues, but there are two points that are missed.

One is that MPs want to be here. When you talk to MPs, all of them want to be here. The challenge often, as whip, is telling people to stay away because of their health or circumstances in their lives that mean they shouldn't come.

The second point is that I'm very confused by the Conservatives being so hot on this point, because if it were true that people using hybrid were going to do such a terrible job in representing their constituents, would it not make it easier for them to defeat those people, and isn't that their objective? If they thought that these provisions would be so poorly utilized and that people would do such a terrible job representing their communities, wouldn't they be the biggest advocates of us making the “dumb mistake” of using this, so that we could be easy people to beat? They could replace us and then get rid of the system.

I don't fully understand that position.

If I could, I'll finish on the point that I was on earlier, because I understand that Mr. Brassard took offence to what I was saying. I was simply trying to illustrate that whenever possible.... We've had good opportunities to work together, and there were proud moments in Parliament. For me, Bill C-3 and Bill C-4 were really proud moments when we came together as all parties to find solutions and to set aside our differences.

As a House leader, whether on this matter or on any matter, I recognize that we're in a minority government, and good ideas should come forward. When those ideas are good and supported by other parties, of course, I would support them.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you very much, Minister.

Again, using hybrid is an option; it's not an obligation. I just want to highlight that, because we keep hearing about an “all or nothing”.

Ms. Blaney brought up a really good point a couple of meetings ago regarding under which conditions MPs should be allowed to participate virtually. If we put out prescribed conditions, would that not actually go against the right to privacy? For instance, if it said that it could only be in case of illness, then everyone would know, if I was participating virtually, that something was wrong, that I was ill. If I had a problem, I would be more comfortable to go to my whip and say, “Look, I need to be working virtually today because of X, Y and Z.”

Would you feel that it would actually be hindering people in terms of their right to privacy?

Yes, I understand that if we were to use virtual all the time, it would be up to the electorate to decide whether or not they felt they were represented well come the next election. Would you agree with that?

● (1255)

**Hon. Mark Holland:** I get a sense from that buzzer that I have limited time to answer the question.

I would say, through you, Madam Chair, yes. I as whip was aware intimately of many personal details that frankly had no business being out in the world and should have been able to be kept private, and I would be made very challenged under that sort of model.

I would remind members that in our conduct and in the way we set our rules, we believe that all members are honourable and will act honourably. In my experience, they do.

**The Chair:** Thank you for those words.

Thank you.

Thank you so much, Minister, for taking the time today to appear and be part of the study. We wish you a really good rest of the day.

Members, we're going to suspend quickly and have a quick in camera conversation about some committee business.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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