

On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs adopted the following [motion](#):

*It was agreed, — That in camera transcripts of the meetings held on May 28 and June 2, 2020, be shared, by the clerk of the committee, with the Chief Information Officer of the House of Commons administration and any other officials deemed appropriate; and, that the CIO provide to the committee recommended redactions to the in camera transcripts regarding national security no later than July 3, 2020.*

On July 7, 2020, the committee agreed to the redactions suggested by the Chief Information Officer of the House of Commons, adopting the following [motion](#):

*It was agreed, — That the specified sections of the transcripts of in camera proceedings for the committee's May 28 and June 2, 2020 meetings be rendered public committee evidence, provided that agreed upon redactions are made.*

The redacted committee evidence from portions of the May 28<sup>th</sup> in camera meeting appears below.

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## COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA PROCÉDURE ET DES AFFAIRES DE LA CHAMBRE

UNEDITED, TRANSLATED EVIDENCE NUMBER 18,  
TÉMOIGNAGES DU COMITÉ NUMÉRO 18, TRADUIT, NON ÉDITÉ

### À HUIS CLOS - IN CAMERA

**Thursday, May 28, 2020 - Le jeudi 28 mai 2020**

\* \* \*

🕒 (1105)

[Traduction]

I'm sure we're all familiar with these rules, considering we've all been taking part in the COVID-19 committee hearings and the other PROC meetings we've had before. In case there are any new members I will point this out from time to time.

Also, to raise a point of **The Chair (Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.))**:  
Welcome back, everyone. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to Meeting No. 18 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Pursuant to the order of reference of May 26th, 2020, the committee is meeting on its study of parliamentary duties and the COVID-19 pandemic.

I take it you've had a chance to read the motion. Does everyone have a copy of the motion and they've had a chance to read it, the motion of May 26th? Okay.

There was also a report that was submitted on May 11th from the Speaker. That's a report dated May 7th, but it was submitted to us on May 11th by the Speaker. That's something you should also take a look at if you haven't already. I'm assuming most people have.

Pursuant to the motion adopted by the House on May 26th, 2020, the committee may continue to sit virtually until Monday, September 21st of this year to consider matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other matters. Certain limitations on the virtual committee hearings held until now are now removed, so this is very important to note. As just mentioned, the committee is now able to consider other matters and in addition to receiving evidence, the committee may also consider motions as we normally do.

As stipulated in the latest order of reference from the House, all motions shall be decided by way of a recorded vote. Finally, the House has also authorized our committee to conduct some of our proceedings in camera, as we are today, specifically for the purpose of considering draft reports or the selection of witnesses.

A reminder that in camera proceedings may be conducted in a manner that takes into account the potential risk to confidentiality inherent in meetings with remote participants. For example, all members should consider taking steps to ensure that they are the only people able to listen to the discussion. By this, I don't mean that you have to be an IT expert and you need to figure out whether someone's hacking you. I just mean that your surroundings, in your room, in your home, wherever you are, in your office, in camera meetings are confidential and no one else is in the room with you, other than what I'm about to mention. Each member is allowed to have one staff, the House leader's office is also allowed one staff, the whip's offices are allowed one staff each as well. Those are some of the staff that you see on the call today.

Yes, Mr. Richards.

**Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC):** Madam Chair, my staffer who has been authorized is having troubles with the main account that he uses for Zoom, so while IT tries to sort that out, I'll allow him to listen in on my feed. That's okay, isn't it?

**The Chair:** Yes, that's absolutely okay.

**Mr. Blake Richards:** I just wanted to make sure, in case you saw someone in the corner of the screen, that you wouldn't worry that I was trying to share any secrets or anything.

**The Chair:** I'm sure most of our family members probably would not care about the subjects that we're talking about—

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Fair enough on that.

**The Chair:** —but it is a part of our in camera rules and of course we have to respect that and respect the confidentiality of our proceedings, so thank you for letting me know.

Members of the committee, the clerk and the analysts should participate with the camera on. Your staff, who are present during this meeting, whether it is with their own account generally, should keep their camera off and should remain on mute.

To ensure an orderly meeting I'd like to outline a few rules to follow.

Interpretation in this video will work very much like in a regular committee meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of either “floor”, “English”, or “French”. As you are speaking, if you plan to alternate from one language to the other, you should also switch the interpretation channel so that it aligns with the language you are speaking. To allow for this, perhaps you should pause while speaking just for a brief moment while you change your channel.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When you are ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. When you're not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

order, just unmute yourself and speak into your microphone and say, “point of order” to get my attention.

One again, headsets are strongly encouraged.

You may be wondering why we have some people from the House administration here with us today. It is not because we have witnesses today, but it is because we have changed the platform we intended using for the in camera meeting today. Originally we were all informed by IT yesterday that the platform we were going to use for in camera meetings was going to be Skype, and then earlier today we were informed that we could proceed with Zoom. Hopefully the House administration is here just for the beginning of the meeting to answer any questions you may have around security and this platform being able to accommodate the in camera meeting.

Perhaps I'll just let our guests give us a little bit of insight into why this switch was made and then if any of the members have any questions, hopefully you'll have some time to allow that.

Who would like to go first?

🕒 (1110)

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Eric Janse):** It will be Mr. Stéphan Aubé.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Aubé.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé (Chief Information Officer, Digital Services and Real Property, House of Commons):** Thank you, Madame Chair.

*[Translation]*

I want to thank the committee members for giving me the opportunity to present this here today. My name is Stéphan Aubé. I'm responsible for information services in the House of Commons.

*[Traduction]*

I am here today with Eric Janse, who is the clerk assistant responsible for committees and legislative services directorate.

I am also here with Michel Patrice—

**The Chair:** We're having a little bit of a tough time hearing. I don't know if anybody else is. The volume has just dropped down.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** It has disappeared.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Madam Chair, it's my fault. I didn't use the proper channel. I'm sorry for that. I know I'm recommending for you guys to use that and I'm not doing, so I'm sorry about that.

As you know, Tuesday there was a motion adopted by the House that allows committees that have been authorized to meet to also meet in camera. Over the last two weeks, actually since May 4, when I was accompanying the Speaker during his appearance at this committee, we made a presentation and we were asked a lot of questions around Zoom, and more specifically the security aspects. At that time, we had indicated that any time we released a new product or platform, we do take pride in assessing the security posture of these products, and we do so in collaboration with our security partners. Having said that, over the last few weeks, we've been working \*\*\*\*\* , to certify our platform that would be used for in-camera meetings. \*\*\*\*\*  
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\*\*\*\*\*. For those unfamiliar with this terminology, Protected B is

defined as, “Applies to information or assets that, if compromised, could cause serious injury to an individual, organization or government.”

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I would like quickly to share some quotes \*\*\*\*\*  
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\*\*\*\*\*, “With the numerous mitigations HOC \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\* believes the \*\*\*\*\* implementation has been architected-as securely as possible considering that it may be used from insecure spaces and leveraged to public Internet. Given the HOC \*\*\*\*\* architecture proposed for this solution \*\*\*\*\*

🕒 (1115)

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Chair, I’m rising on a point of order. There’s an issue with the translation.

*[Traduction]*

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Okay.

*[Translation]*

Do you want me to start again more slowly?

*[Traduction]*

**The Chair:** Yes. Maybe we can restart.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Okay. I'm sorry about that.

\*\*\*\*\*, “With the numerous mitigations HOC has incorporated into the overall design of the videoconferencing platform, \*\*\*\*\* has been architected as securely as possible.”

There still seems to be some people—okay.

Michel, do you want to read the two paragraphs on your side? These ones here. Okay?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Justin Vaive):** Madam Chair, it's Justin the clerk talking.

We just had a translation/interpretation issue. It appears the ambient voice from just outside the translation booth is coinciding with the feed from the booth itself, so Mr. Michel Patrice, the

deputy clerk, will continue to provide the committee with that information, and that should resolve the issue.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's interesting. We haven't had that problem yet.

All right. Mr. Patrice.

**Mr. Michel Patrice (Deputy Clerk, Administration, House of Commons):** I will try.

“With the numerous mitigations, HOC has incorporated into the overall design, \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* has been architected as securely as possible considering that it may be used from insecure spaces and leveraged to public Internet”.

“Given the HOC \*\*\*\*\* architecture proposed for the solution, \*\*\*\*\* the mitigation put in place by HOC \*\*\*\*\* , when combined with appropriate user awareness and monitoring, is sufficient to safeguard Protected B information from the most common threats”.

“\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* risk caused by using the public Internet would not be avoided by selecting a different videoconferencing solution such as those currently used within the Government of Canada”.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Thank you, Mr. Patrice.

*[Traduction]*

“\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* That said, some of the committees that discuss very sensitive information should exercise a strong degree of caution”. I will just make that point.

I want to thank you for your time, and we would be pleased to answer any questions you might have based on our appearance here.

**The Chair:** Do any of the members have questions?

Ms. Petipas Taylor.

*[Translation]*

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

I have a question for Mr. Aubé.

You said that you took some steps to certify this platform. I was wondering whether you could specify the steps taken for the certification.

🕒 (1120)

**M. Stéphan Aubé:** Okay.

Unlike before, we \*\*\*\*\* a version of Zoom \*\*\*\*\*. That's the major change. Now, all meeting discussions \*\*\*\*\*  
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\*\*\*\*\* That way, we managed to mitigate all access to information risks. The remaining risks are the usual security risks, \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*.

We then established a team \*\*\*\*\*. In the past two weeks, we've assessed this architecture \*\*\*\*\*. The team assessed the information that we provided and that it observed. The team recommended that we could use this infrastructure.

We've taken this approach in recent weeks.

*[Traduction]*

**The Chair:** I just want to clarify. That was kind of the question I had on my mind too because I believed with Skype we were keeping the data within the country.

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\*\*\*\*\*? Where did the data go to. What country was it being held in?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** For all public meetings, the data was held in Canada. Zoom is using two data centres, one in Vancouver. The data centres are owned and operated by Amazon in Canada, one in Vancouver and one in Toronto, so for all the public meetings, the data and the traffic are basically within these two data centres, so from Canada, anywhere people participate, it goes into these data centres.

For in camera meetings so it is transparent to you (*Inaudible*) when we organized this meeting, \*\*\*\*\*.

The reason we want to continue for public meetings the use of the Amazon data centres is they have an ability to scale for larger meetings, so whenever there is a large number of participants

or a large number of meetings that would be operating concurrently, our preference is to still use these data centres in the context of public meetings.

For all in camera meetings, we will \*\*\*\*\*  
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**The Chair:** Wow, that's incredible. Zoom has really grown its capacity in a short period of time because we know so many other companies that are still keeping their data abroad and that's pretty amazing.

Any questions from any of the other members?

Yes, Mr. Brassard.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** I raised my hand. I hope that was okay.

Mr. Aubé, we've seen in other jurisdictions that I'm aware of, South Africa and other countries as well, where their legislatures have been in session and there have been circumstances of infiltration, and in the case of South Africa, there were pornographic imageries while their legislature was in session that were broadcast over Zoom.

Do you know of any circumstances that we have seen where there's been at least an attempt at infiltration within our platform? One of the things we discussed in our last session was the fact that a G7 country would be a great target for hackers or state-sponsored infiltration, if you will.

Have we seen any attempts at that at all, and how do we monitor or are we continually monitoring for those types of activities?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Two points to your question, Mr. Brassard.

The first one, the attempts that we've seen, sir, and I can't link them to the use of Zoom, we've seen a higher attempt at the accounts of members. We've seen some attempts at accounts of members \*\*\*\*\*  
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So we have not seen attacks specifically on the House infrastructure. We've seen mostly attempts at the end point. \*\*\*\*\*  
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🕒 (1125)

**Mr. John Brassard:** So other than best practices of \*\*\*\*\*, are there any particular vulnerability points that members may have? I'm thinking about those who are in remote or rural communities where there's not that high-speed Internet broadband, for example. In some cases, some may use satellite technology for Internet accessibility.

So are there any particular vulnerable points for members where we could see that infiltration?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** There are two things I would say. The importance, Sir, of using \*\*\*\*\* and the participation into a Zoom meeting. What you have seen mostly in the news, Sir, is related to a misconfigured session of Zoom that was done by someone.

We have a preconfigured environment for Zoom, as I said, in our attendance, \*\*\*\*\* . It's very important for us that we push this.

What you have seen, for example, in South Africa, there was a meeting that didn't have the concept of validating who attended the meeting, Sir, so they allowed people who were unknown to the meeting.

The second thing is there are controls such as \*\*\*\*\* . Environment is very flexible, but at the same time flexibility brings these issues.

Hence, this is why we're working really closely with your offices to ensure that these controls are in place, and if you want to use a Zoom meeting, and leverage the usability of that meeting, that you leverage the House infrastructure. That's my recommendation for this, Sir.

Always as usual, Sir, we need to be careful about the types of discussions that are being held during these meetings. \*\*\*\*\* shouldn't be having these types of meetings if it's national security discussions on a PC and a public [Inaudible].

**Mr. John Brassard:** Thank you, Mr. Aubé.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** We're pretty proud, Sir, of our \*\*\*\*\*. I will not say that we're 100% proof because \*\*\*\*\* there is always a threat, but there is a threat to anything that's being leveraged to public Internet. To be honest, this is what's going to dictate the maximum amount of security levels that you can actually offer leveraging an Internet connection.

Without getting into the discussion of supply chains products, this is when risks come about mostly right now.

🕒 (1130)

**Mr. John Brassard:** Sorry, Madam Chair. Can I ask Mr. Aubé one more question?

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

**Mr. John Brassard:** On the issue of voting, one of the things the committee has, obviously, been charged with looking at that. In our last session, we had Microsoft here, we had Zoom, we had others as well. I'm sure you followed and monitored that closely.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Yes.

**Mr. John Brassard:** What are some of the challenges you see at this point with respect to the potential of voting going forward and the security aspects and concerns that relates to?

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Madam Chair, may I respond?

**The Chair:** Absolutely. That's why you're here.

I think this might be the last question. Just raise your hand in the participant bar if you have any questions. Hopefully, after this we can move on to our committee business.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** Thank you.

Mr. Brassard, I can confirm to you that we are already working \*\*\*\*\* on this. We've been working \*\*\*\*\* on these two issues, private committee meetings and also voting, over the last two weeks.

\*\*\*\*\*, it comes back to \*\*\*\*\* basic areas to consider, Sir. \*\*\*\*\*  
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Having said that, Sir, we believe we have all the tools if ever the members request to actually come with a secure solution. We're very close to having an architecture that could be agreed to. I'm not saying we have a solution, Sir, but we have the tools in order to provide an infrastructure once you will be requesting us to provide, if you request us to provide a solution on that subject.

Our relationship is very important, \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*, on that subject.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Aubé.

Yes, Madame Normandin.

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I just want to make sure that I understood correctly. I know that the committee's mandate is to study electronic voting. Since Mr. Aubé made his comments in camera, we'll have the opportunity to invite him back as a witness.

**Mr. Stéphan Aubé:** If I'm invited to participate in the meeting, we'll come back to give you all the information that you need in camera or in public.

*[Traduction]*

**The Chair:** Well, don't be surprised if you get an invitation quite soon, Mr. Aubé, Mr. Patrice. I'm sure the whole team will be invited back quite soon.

Thank you so much for being here today. We'll just give you a little bit of time to clear out.

Okay.