



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Health

HESA • NUMBER 001 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, February 3, 2016

—
Chair

Mr. Bill Casey

Standing Committee on Health

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•(1540)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. David Gagnon): Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

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

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

Monsieur Ayoub.

[Translation]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): I nominate Bill Casey for chair.

[English]

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Ayoub that Mr. Casey be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: I invite Mr. Casey to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.)): Thank you very much. That's the easiest election I've had, and I've had several.

The next act for the committee would be to elect vice-chairs.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: You're up, Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition. I am now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): I nominate Len Webber.

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

Are there any further motions?

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Leitch.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): I'll nominate Don, but don't tell anyone I did that.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Your secret is safe with me.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. Leitch that Mr. Davies be elected second vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

•(1545)

The Chair: Before we start, I want to say how pleased I am to be on this committee. I'm not a medical practitioner, as some of you are, but medical practitioners have been my benefactors, probably more than I would have liked, and I am very grateful for the services I've been provided and the health care I've been given.

I'm a survivor of two different cancers, and I had two different heart attacks, and I'm still here thanks to people like you around the table. I recognize that I'm not a practitioner, but I've been involved on the other side of the fence.

I also want to say that it's nice to be at this table with some of my former colleagues. Mr. Carrie and I were talking the other day about Chuck Cadman, a former colleague of ours who died of malignant melanoma while a member. Also, when I was elected as an independent, my seatmate was Don Davies, so we got to know each other. Dr. Kellie Leitch may not remember this, but 19 years ago she met with me in the basement of a restaurant in Wentworth and convinced me to run for office.

So I feel quite at home here, and I look forward to an excellent committee, a committee that helps people, because the first thing I learned when I was elected as a member of Parliament was how many people need help. Many of them are invisible. You don't see them in regular walks of life. The number of people who need help really struck me.

I am very optimistic about this committee. I'm looking forward to it. We have so many subjects that we can talk about, but first of all, we have to do some routine proceedings. If the committee would like to proceed with routine proceedings, we can establish some of the things that we need to do. Does the committee agree?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right. One thing is about the services of analysts as our work unfolds, as stated:

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

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: I'm moving the motion.

The Chair: All right. So moved by Mr. Ayoub.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Another one that's really important is the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. There is a format for that, I understand:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and composed of five (5) members including the Chair, the two (2) Vice-Chairs, and two (2) members of the governing party; that quorum for the Subcommittee consists of at least three (3) members, at least one (1) of whom is a member of the Official Opposition; and that each member of the Subcommittee be permitted to have one (1) staff member present at any meetings of the Subcommittee.

This is going to be a very important subcommittee, because it's going to determine what we talk about and what we analyze. We are the masters of our own agenda, but we also have to analyze legislation. As issues come up.... Just in the last few days the Zika virus has come up as something we might want to talk about. But we control our agenda. Ideas should go to the steering committee, and then the steering committee will decide what we're going to talk about and the witnesses we'll hear.

Do I have a motion to establish the subcommittee on agenda and procedure?

Mr. Colin Carrie: I have a question, Mr. Chair. My understanding is that you do not want the parliamentary secretary on the committee.

The Chair: I believe that she's not a member of the committee, but she's here.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Yes, but do you want her on the subcommittee?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: It's our committee to determine where we're going.

Mr. Don Davies: I move that we adopt that motion.

The Chair: The motion has been moved.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Perfect. We're doing great.

Concerning the reduced quorum, there's a motion:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four (4) members are present, including one (1) member of the opposition and one (1) member of the government; and

That in the case of previously scheduled meetings taking place outside of the Parliamentary Precinct, the Committee members in attendance be required to wait for 15 minutes following the designated start of the meeting before they may proceed to hear witnesses and receive evidence, regardless of whether opposition or government members are present.

Sometimes members don't make it, and the witnesses are here. Rather than make them wait, this motion allows us to go ahead without quorum just to ask questions. There are no votes, no motions; it's just to hear witnesses.

Would anybody like to...? So moved.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now on the distribution of documents:

That only the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to distribute documents, including motions, to the members of the Committee;

That, except in cases where there is unanimous consent to proceed otherwise, all documents distributed amongst the Committee members by the Clerk be in both official languages; and

That the Clerk advise all witnesses appearing before the Committee of this requirement.

Would anybody like to move that motion?

So moved by Mr. Davies.

Here's an important one, on working meals and snacks:

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide for working meals and that the cost of these meals be charged to the Committee budget; and

That, subject to availability, the working meals of the Committee be balanced and nutritious.

This is a repeat from last year.

● (1550)

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Yes.

The Chair: So moved.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I didn't clarify. The clerk has asked me to clarify the vote on the one about distribution of documents. It was moved by Mr. Davies, and I didn't get approval from everybody.

Everybody approves; we're good.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The next one is witnesses' expenses:

That, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses not exceeding two (2) representatives per organization, and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Chair, I was wondering if we could add that in order to protect the taxpayers' dollars, every effort should be made to provide video conferencing.

The Chair: Absolutely. Can we add that the alternative should be video conferencing if possible, in the interest of saving dollars?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Yes.

The Chair: I'm glad you did that. These are former motions from the last committee, and we can add whatever we want, or we can amend them any way we want.

Yes Mr. Davies.

Mr. Don Davies: I'm not opposed to the sentiment behind that motion, but I think we have to be somewhat careful about how it's worded. The way it was just proposed, that we do that if it's at all possible, could change the structure of this committee so that most of the testimony would be coming by video conference. It's been my experience that there is a difference between evidence by video conference and evidence here in Ottawa. There are also regional differences as well. What ends up happening is that people who live near Ottawa or who live near central Canada tend to come to the committee in person, and witnesses who come from British Columbia or outside this area tend to not be able to appear face to face with the committee.

I would propose language that doesn't make it seem as though the default is video, and that appearing before us can happen only if that can't happen. I don't have any language to propose, but maybe the clerk or the analysts could help.

The Chair: I propose that we table this proposal and this motion. Perhaps the clerk can come up with some language that everybody is comfortable with. I agree with that. It would mean that people who live around Ottawa would be more likely to be present and have a different impact than would those from further away who would do it by video conference.

Do you agree with that?

Mr. Colin Carrie: I'm open to different wording that the clerk could come up with.

The Chair: That's fine, too.

Do you think you can come up with something for the next meeting?

The Clerk: I can, for the next meeting.

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Perhaps it could be offered as an option, so the witnesses would have the option of doing that if they preferred, but otherwise they would be able to come.

The Chair: Does that work?

We could have something along those lines about it being optional.

Are there any other ideas on this? Are there any suggestions? That's good.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Chairman, maybe we could just deal with this now by incorporating that, because that captured my thought. We could just add the words "however, each witness shall be offered the opportunity to testify by video conference".

The Chair: All right. Does that work, to have the option? Okay.
• (1555)

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Chairman, if we say, "however, each witness shall be offered the opportunity to testify by video conference", that would ensure that when they are spoken to, it will be offered to them. In some ways I think that will increase the amount of video conferencing.

The Chair: That works.

Do we have video facilities here? Will this be our meeting room?

The Clerk: It will not necessarily be.

The Chair: We'll have to make sure we have the facilities to do that.

Do you have the words that he has proposed now, "shall be offered the opportunity to attest by video"?

Are all agreed with the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Good.

On staff at in camera meetings:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each Committee member in attendance may be permitted to have one (1) staff member present at in camera meetings, and that each party be permitted to have one (1) staff member from the Whip or House Leader's Office present at in camera meetings.

In camera meetings are meetings where the public and most people are asked to leave. This allows us to keep one staff member.

Mr. John Oliver: I'll move that.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Okay.

Transcripts for in camera meetings:

That one (1) copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the Committee Clerk's office for consultation by members of the Committee and by their staff.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: On notice of motions:

That 48 hours' notice be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the Committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration;

That the notice of motion be filed with the Clerk of the Committee and distributed to members in both official languages; and

That motions received by 4 p.m. from Monday to Thursday at 2:00 p.m., on Friday be distributed to members on the same day.

That's just to give everybody lots of chance to know what will be discussed and what issues will be coming up.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: I so move.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: On time limits for witnesses' statements and questioning, it says here that witnesses will be allowed up to 10 minutes to make their opening statements. I have hardly ever heard a witness confine their statement to 10 minutes. Is this what we want to do? This way we would get more questions and we will find out what we want to find out and not necessarily what they want to say.

All in favour of 10 minutes?

Mr. Oliver.

Mr. John Oliver: Sir, may I ask a question? If the committee decides to give them additional time if they ask, would we have the authority to do that? This doesn't limit us from extending their time, does it?

The Chair: No. We could extend time if somebody wanted further time. If they wanted to extend their statements, we could do it by unanimous consent or just a vote, could we not?

Yes, by unanimous consent, but I will note for new members that often witnesses will talk for a long time if you don't put a limit on it. Some witnesses have a hard time getting to their point. If we were to put it at 10 minutes, it would be a good place to start. If we want to change it by unanimous consent, we can.

Mr. Davies.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Chairman, I'm in favour of the motion for 10 minutes. I agree with you completely. It has been my experience that 10 minutes is a good amount of time for people to have a good opening statement and preserve the ability of the committee to ask questions.

Some of this, I think, requires us to think a bit further about the structure of the committee. In regard to the two-hour meetings we've had, there are generally two kinds of meetings, in my experience. There is one single two-hour meeting, or very often in fact, I think the more common practice has been to split the two hours into two separate panels.

When we split it into two separate panels of one hour each, sometimes what I find is that if you have more than two witnesses speaking for 10 minutes, it cuts into the questions too much. Let's say you have three witnesses scheduled. That would be 30 minutes. What I would like the committee to think about is that if we are going to go to two panels per meeting—I have language drafted for this—and if we do have a third witness or organization, we restrict their testimony to eight minutes.

I'll read what I have—you don't have to take this down—just so you know where I'm coming from: Where a meeting is divided into two one-hour panels, when two or fewer witnesses or organizations appear before the committee, each shall be allotted 10 minutes to make their opening statement, and when three witnesses or organizations appear before the committee, each shall be allowed eight minutes to make their opening statement.

It's only by getting 24 minutes that you can actually get that first round of questions completed in the hour.

● (1600)

The Chair: If I'm not mistaken, each witness is allowed to have two people as a group, so are you talking about maybe three groups of two people?

Mr. Don Davies: Yes.

The Chair: Would each have eight minutes if there are three on the same subject?

Mr. Don Davies: Yes.

The Chair: That makes sense to me.

Mr. Don Davies: Yes, and it's my preference over time that two witnesses per hour actually is ideal, because when you do have three, I think it waters down the time. I think the orthodox position should be two witnesses, but in the event that you decide to schedule three, you have to truncate that a little or else you don't get through the first round of questions.

The Chair: All right. We'll target for two.

Mr. Kang.

Mr. Darshan Singh Kang (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Would the two witnesses get eight minutes, with four minutes each?

Would they get eight minutes each?

The Chair: One organization can come with two people. They can divide the time between them if they want, or one could speak and take the eight minutes. If it's two witnesses, it's 10 minutes for the opening statement. If it's three witnesses, it's eight minutes.

Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Chair, could I make a suggestion?

Don, would you be able to provide members of the committee with your wording, just so we could have it in front of us?

Mr. Don Davies: Yes, if you prefer.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Would that be all right?

The Chair: I'm afraid I didn't hear what you said.

Mr. Colin Carrie: For the next meeting, he could distribute it to the committee just so there's no confusion.

The Chair: Yes, that's a good idea. There's no panic on this. That's good.

That's the end of the routine motions that I have. Does anybody else have any direction or motions they would like to propose?

Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Chair, I was wondering about the second paragraph under speaking order in regard to the questioning during the second round. It talks about the first round of questioning and the second round of questioning. I believe PROC adopted certain—

The Chair: I missed that. I'm sorry.

Mr. Colin Carrie: No problem. Did you want to take the floor?

The Chair: Sure. That was the last one. I missed that. There are time limits for witnesses' statements and for questions. The witnesses should be allowed up 10 minutes to make their opening statements, but in this case, if there are three, we're going to restrict it to eight.

For rotation by time, one Conservative member of the committee would have six minutes, one Liberal six minutes, one NDP six minutes, and another Liberal six minutes. In the second round, the Liberals would have six minutes, the Conservatives six minutes, the Liberals six minutes, the Conservatives five minutes, and the NDP three minutes.

Yes, Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Chair, in the document I received on the health committee work, during the questioning of witnesses, seven minutes are allotted for the first round of questioning, and in the second and subsequent rounds of questioning, five minutes are allotted to each questioner.

I believe that PROC adopted that timeline. I believe that what they put forward was that the Liberals would start first. It would be Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Liberal for the first round of seven minutes, and then CPC, Liberal, CPC, Liberal, NDP for the second round, which would be five, five, five, five, and two minutes.

The Chair: It works for me, but how does the committee feel?

Mr. Davies.

Mr. Don Davies: I support Colin's suggestion, but my information from PROC is that in the second round the order is five, five, five, five, and three minutes for the NDP. That's what I have written down.

The Chair: Is the second round five, five, five...?

Mr. Don Davies: Five and three. So the second round is Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, and then NDP, and it's five, five, five, five, and three. I think he said two minutes, but PROC has three minutes.

Mr. Colin Carrie: In the interest of warm and fuzziness and co-operation, I'm happy to accept my NDP colleague's amendment to what I have put in front of you.

• (1605)

The Chair: Yes, I agree with it too. In the interest of warmth and fuzziness and sunny ways, and all those sorts of thing, I agree with that.

I think we all bring something to the table, and I would welcome Mr. Davies' contribution on an equal footing.

What is your proposal again? Yours is the same as Mr. Carrie's, except it's five minutes for the NDP. Is that correct?

Mr. Colin Carrie: He said three.

The Chair: Three minutes.

Mr. Don Davies: I'd happily take five, but—

The Chair: You might run out.

Mr. Don Davies: He referred to PROC's proposal where it was five, five, five, five, and three minutes.

The Chair: Is that all right with you?

Mr. Don Davies: Again, I'd prefer five minutes. I like the equal footing, so I'd prefer that, but, if not, I'll happily take three.

The Chair: The chair will try to be fair. How's that?

The proposal is seven minutes each for the first round, and then for the second round, five, five, five, five, and three minutes.

Mr. John Oliver: I just want to be clear on that seven minutes each. It's Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Liberal for seven minutes, so there are two seven-minute blocks for Liberal, one for Conservative, and one for NDP in the first round—

The Chair: Well now, let me see.

Mr. John Oliver: —and the second round is Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, NDP.

The Chair: The proposal by Mr. Carrie is Liberal, Conservative, NDP, and Liberal for seven minutes.

Mr. John Oliver: Seven minutes each, yes.

The Chair: The second round is Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, and then NDP.

Is everybody in agreement with that? It sounds fair.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: All right, great; we have a changed rotation time, then.

Is there anything else that anybody wants to bring up at this moment?

Yes, Mr. Davies

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Chairman, I have a few motions that are often made to supplement the standard routine motions. The first motion would be that all documents referred to the committee be sent to all members.

The Chair: Are there any questions or discussion on that proposal?

Mr. John Oliver: May I ask whether there was an alternative distribution model in the past? Do you have an understanding of the reason for the different distribution models?

Mr. Don Davies: Many committees adopt this. Often during the course of testimony the witness will refer to a document and one of the members will ask to please have that sent to the committee. Rather than every time that happens having to request that it be distributed, it's that documents that come to the clerk are automatically distributed to committee members.

Mr. John Oliver: That makes sense.

The Chair: It gets tricky when people bring documents other than through the clerk. That's why one of our motions was that the distribution of all documents go through the clerk.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Chair, if I could ask my colleague, how do these affect what we've already passed in the routine motions under distribution of documents?

How is that different, Don?

Mr. Don Davies: My understanding is that under distribution of documents, it says, “only the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to distribute documents, including motions, to the members of the Committee”, so it specifies that it's only the clerk who gets to authorize them.

This motion puts the positive obligation to have all of the documents that are referred be distributed.

The Chair: To everyone.

Mr. Don Davies: Yes.

The Chair: That's normal, isn't it?

Yes, Mr. Ayoub.

[Translation]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: I will speak in French first.

[English]

If you have a problem, I'll try to practise my English, but *je vais essayer en français*.

[Translation]

Are there any documents, be they public or more confidential, that sometimes come back to the chair, against a witness's will? Has that happened in committees in the past? If we ask that it always be public, things become more restrictive. Since this is my first committee meeting, I don't know whether it has happened before.

[English]

The Chair: I didn't get that.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: I'm just asking if sometimes there are documents that the witness wouldn't like the rest of the committee to see at first, or perhaps would like to give to the chair first. I'm wondering what the past experience has been on that kind of thing.

The Chair: I can ask for clarification from the clerk, but if somebody refers to a document, we can ask for the document, which has to be distributed to everybody and has to be in both official languages.

If a witness does refer to a document, we have the right to ask for that document, do we not?

• (1610)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Would it be okay if we asked the clerk for clarification?

The Chair: Yes.

[Translation]

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: We could ask the clerk to keep confidential documents.

[English]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: I'm talking about protection for the witness.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: *Oui*. There are two separate questions: one on the distribution of documents, and the other on the confidentiality of documents.

[Translation]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Okay.

[English]

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: In the past, whenever there was a confidential document, either from a witness or from one of the members of the panel, it was the responsibility of the clerk to keep that confidential and to outline that to all members of the committee. Those were usually given in camera. We all would respectfully make sure that we were the only members...not even sharing them with our colleagues in the House of Commons.

I would hope that we would always keep to the letter of that responsibility that we take as fellow members of the committee.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Good.

Merci.

The Chair: Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: I wonder if the clerk could perhaps comment on what Mr. Davies proposes.

Would what we've already passed cover his issue?

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Carrie.

I guess it would, because it says in the motion that “all documents” received will be distributed by me in both official languages. It's normal practice for each committee to send documents to all members.

The Chair: I don't see in our motion where it says it will be sent to “all” members. It says only that the clerk “be authorized to distribute documents, including motions, to the members of the Committee”.

But I guess that could be to all members, so I think we're covered.

Yes, Mr. Davies.

Mr. Don Davies: Well, I think a practice could develop, but technically that's not what it says.

The sentence reads, “That only the Clerk of the Committee be authorized to distribute documents, including motions, to the members of the Committee”. What it says at its narrowest is that only the clerk may distribute documents. It does not go on to say what gets distributed or under what circumstances.

I would actually insert a second clause right after that, obligating that all documents referred to the committee be distributed to all members, as a companion piece. I understand Colin's point. It sort of seems like it's understood, but when you read that first sentence, it's only an authorization clause, not really a directional clause.

The second one, of course, refers to the requirement that it be bilingual, that it be in both official languages.

The Chair: I think we can add the word “all”. It just says “to the members of committee”. If we change it, and say “to all members of the committee”, would that satisfy that part of it? I think that's what it should say.

Mr. Don Davies: I think that clarifies it.

As I read “to the members of the committee”, yes, that would mean all members, but I still don't think it does quite what my motion does, which puts a positive obligation that all documents referred to this committee that are in both languages be distributed to all members.

The Chair: That's fine with me.

Yes, Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: I was wondering if I could ask Don whether, as a friendly amendment, under distribution of documents, we could just put that “only the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute all documents”. If we added the word “all” there, would that...?

The Chair: It would be “all documents to all members”.

Mr. Colin Carrie: It would be “all documents to all members”. It said “including motions to the members of the committee”.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Davies, are you happy with that?

Mr. Don Davies: Sure.

The Chair: In my experience, the best way for documents to be dispersed is by the clerk. That way everybody gets exactly the same thing in both official languages.

I think we're covered there, “That only the clerk be authorized to distribute all documents, including motions, to all members of the committee”.

Are we good?

All right, so we've amended our previous motion.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Mr. Davies.

Mr. Don Davies: I have about two or three more motions, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, finish that.

Mr. Don Davies: The next one is similar:

That all requests to appear before the Committee be distributed to the Committee members.

The Chair: That's fine with me.

(Motion agreed to)

● (1615)

Mr. Don Davies: I have two more.

Mr. Chairman, this is often adopted by committees:

That whenever the Minister appears before the Committee, every effort be made to ensure that the meeting is televised.

This requirement is not mandated, but it is an expression by this committee of respect for the minister, which I think is commensurate with the importance of the minister's appearance.

The Chair: That's if it's possible with all reasonable efforts. I don't have a problem with that. Does anybody have a problem with that motion?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Don Davies: I have one more.

This one, Mr. Chairman, would be more familiar to previous members of Parliament, but I'll read the motion first: That all proceedings of the committee shall be public except, one, when discussing a draft report, or two, when at least two-thirds of the committee members so determine.

I'll speak to it briefly, Mr. Chairman.

You may have had the experience, as I did with previous Parliaments, that the previous government and committees went in camera a lot, and any time committee business was discussed, there was automatically a motion to go in camera, and all committee business went in camera. Many of us, as parliamentarians, felt that was an inappropriate use of the power of in camera. It shielded important committee deliberations from the public. For instance, if we were discussing committee business about what we might want to study, then none of that was made public and we couldn't talk about it. However, I do recognize that the one very important part of the in camera business is when we are discussing a report, and that's when we want to be in camera, so that we can have a frank discussion among ourselves about the witness testimony and evidence, and I think that's appropriate.

The second part I've just drafted. I couldn't think of another appropriate time to go in camera, but I think one could arise, so that's why I thought that when this committee itself so determines, it could go in camera. I picked two-thirds because that would mean seven. That would require that all of the government members and at least one member of the opposition would support that.

I would move that this motion be adopted by this committee in the spirit of transparency and the public conduct of this committee.

The Chair: Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Chair, I think that would be a more substantive motion. Perhaps Don could put that in writing so that we could actually take a look and discuss the implications among ourselves, and that probably you would like to do the same thing.

The Chair: It's the chair's intent to have a very open and transparent committee. I want this to be the best committee that it can be in the interest of Canadians, but also I don't want to restrict us from making our own decisions either.

I do accept the idea or your motion, Don. If you could put that into writing, we'll have a look at it, and then we'll decide, but that's excellent.

Mr. Don Davies: Will do, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: I really am hopeful that this committee will just work in the interests of the people.

Mr. Oliver.

Mr. John Oliver: I'm just wondering for your consideration if we also could think about whether a simple majority would be sufficient for the decision. I think that would be a more carefully thought through.... We'll talk about it, and maybe we can come back.

Mr. Don Davies: I'll draft that and we can discuss it.

The Chair: All right. Are there any other motions?

Mr. Don Davies: That's it.

The Chair: Is there any other business that we should conduct today?

Actually, we need two more members for the steering committee. Should we identify the two members for the steering committee?

Mr. Oliver, I think you expressed an interest in it.

• (1620)

Mr. John Oliver: Yes, I'm happy to volunteer.

The Chair: Mr. Eyolfson.

Mr. Doug Eyolfson: I'd like to volunteer for that.

The Chair: Okay. There's our steering committee.

Now, there are so many things we can discuss and so many directions we can go in. I've had a lot of people mention mental health—a lot—and I've had people mention catastrophic pharmaceuticals as a subject, and also the Zika virus. As well, there's a big role for the Government of Canada in aboriginal health, a big role, and certainly, there have been recent events that would justify a close, hard look at the role the Government of Canada plays in health for aboriginals.

There are just so many subjects. How are we going to go about this?

I guess that's the steering committee's decision. When does the steering committee meet? Whenever we want? All right, so how do we do this? Do we have a meeting after this meeting ends? Does the steering committee meet and agree...?

Mr. Davies.

Mr. Don Davies: I'd like to make a suggestion for the committee's consideration, Mr. Chairman.

You're absolutely right: I think the number of important pressing issues facing this committee is larger than most. There are a lot of important issues. We're facing a break week, so there's one thing I would suggest. Why don't all members take the time between now and the next meeting when we come back on the Monday after the break to think of issues that they would like to suggest for study?

Maybe at that first meeting when we come back, we can as a whole committee review the total list. Then the subcommittee can meet, perhaps the next day after that, and out of all those suggestions

and having heard from all the committee members, try to whittle them down to two or three issues that we might want to set on the agenda for this spring.

The Chair: That's a great idea, because even last night I met with dairy farmers and they had an issue with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, which comes under the Department of Health. It's such a comprehensive department and it affects everybody so much.

All right. I agree with that. All in favour of Mr. Davies' suggestion that we think about this during the break?

The only problem is that we aren't coming back on the Monday after the break because that's a holiday, if I'm not mistaken, so it will be Wednesday. We'll meet on that Wednesday. Everybody bring their ideas to the table; we'll submit them to the steering committee, and then the steering committee will meet and decide in what order we're going to do them. Are we good?

Mr. Oliver.

Mr. John Oliver: On the agenda, I also understand that we're at the leisure of the minister in regard to bills that are produced and topics that the minister would like to see discussed. If we're trying to set committee priorities and a committee agenda, would it also be worthwhile inquiring if there's anything emerging from the minister's office that we should be looking at as well? If we could have that in front of us, then we'd have a comprehensive list.

The Chair: Yes, that's a good idea.

Also, when the budget comes out, we will be required to go over the estimates for the department, which I think are in the area of \$40 billion, so they're quite extensive.

That's good. Our direction comes from the committee, but we do have some obligations, and certainly we have to consider the minister's direction. She could ask us to do something and we'll decide whether that's what we'll do or not. In any case, if that's good with everybody; is it all good? Do I have a motion to adjourn?

So moved by Mr. Davies. Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, everybody. I hope this works out really well.

The meeting is adjourned.

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