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Monday, December 13, 2021

Chair: The Honourable Hedy Fry



Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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• (1540)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Aimée Belmore): Honourable members of the committee, I see 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, entertain points of order or participate in debate.

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

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): I would like to nominate the eminent Dr. Hedy Fry to chair this committee.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. Hepfner that Dr. Fry be elected chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Pursuant to the House order of Thursday, November 25, 2021, I will now proceed to a recorded division.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11, nays 1)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Dr. Fry duly elected chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): Thank you very much, everyone, for your confidence in me. I'm hoping I can live up to it. Mr. Waugh knows that I can be a problem sometimes. He's worked with me before. I think this will be a great committee.

I want to move on with the orders of the day. If the committee is in agreement, I invite the clerk to proceed with the election of the vice-chairs.

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

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

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and congratulations to you.

I would like to nominate MP John Nater.

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

Are there any further nominations?

Pursuant to the House order of Thursday, November 25, 2021, I will now proceed to a recorded division.

(Motion agreed to: 11 yeas; 0 nays)

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

• (1545)

[Translation]

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 election of the second vice-chair.

Mr. Housefather, the floor is yours.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): I nominate Martin Champoux.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Housefather that Mr. Champoux be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Pursuant to the House Order of Thursday, November 25, 2021, I will now proceed to a recorded division.

(Motion agreed to)

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

[English]

The Chair: Welcome everyone to the first meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. Regarding the speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether participating virtually or in person.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants in this meeting that taking screenshots or photos of your screens is not permitted. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations from public health authorities, as well as the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on October 19, 2021, to remain healthy and safe, the following is recommended for all those attending the meeting in person.

Anyone with symptoms should participate by Zoom and not attend the meeting in person. Everyone must maintain a two-metre physical distancing whether seated or standing. Everyone must wear a non-medical mask when circulating in the room, and it is recommended in the strongest possible terms that members wear their masks at all times, including when seated. Non-medical masks, which provide better clarity over cloth masks, are available in the room. Everyone present must maintain proper hand hygiene by using the hand sanitizer at the room entrance. Committee rooms are cleaned before and after each meeting. To maintain this, everyone is encouraged to clean surfaces, such as desks, chairs and microphones, with the provided disinfectant wipes when vacating or taking a seat.

As chair, I will be enforcing these measures for the duration of the meeting, and I thank members in advance for their co-operation.

I would now suggest, as the next order of business, the committee now proceed to considering our routine motions. I understand Mr. Tim Louis will be putting these forward.

Do you all have copies of the routine motions?

• (1550)

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to read them in straight down. Do we take the—

The Chair: You read the motion, and then I'll call the vote on it.

Mr. Tim Louis: Perfect.

I will start with “Analyst Services”. I move:

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

The next motion is “Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure”:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five members; the Chair, one member from each recognized party; and that the subcommittee work in a spirit of collaboration.

On “Meeting Without a Quorum”—

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): I have a point of order.

The Chair: There is no sound, actually. I can't really hear very well.

Do you all have sound?

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, I have sound, Madam Chair.

The normal practice is to adopt each of these motions in turn.

The Chair: Yes, I know, but I couldn't really hear what he was saying so I didn't know that he'd finished the first one.

We will deal with the first one, and then we will go to the second and then the third.

Mr. Tim Louis: Thank you.

The Chair: All right, having read the first notice of motion about a 48-hour notice, are there any concerns or comments?

Before I do that, the clerk just pointed out that I should talk about the analyst services.

Is that what you read, Tim?

Mr. Tim Louis: It is, Madam Chair. I went too far, though. I should have stopped—

The Chair: I know.

Let's deal with the analyst services. Are there any comments on the analyst services? Perhaps we could have the clerk introduce herself and then the analysts introduce themselves so you know who they are.

I'll call the vote on the analyst services.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now would the clerk and analysts like to introduce themselves?

The Clerk: My name is Aimée Belmore. I am clerk of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. I look forward to working with all of you.

Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gabrielle de Billy Brown (Analyst): Good afternoon.

I am Gabrielle de Billy Brown. I have been an analyst for the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage since 2007. I am very pleased to be with you again, in this new Parliament.

Mr. Marion Ménard: Good afternoon.

My name is Marion Ménard, and I have been an analyst at the Library of Parliament since 2002.

[*English*]

Welcome to the members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

The Chair: Thank you very much. It's nice to meet you. We will be depending on you a great deal.

Let's go to the next one, Tim.

Mr. Tim Louis: Thanks, Madam Chair.

The next motion is “Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure”. I move:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five members; the Chair, one member from each recognized party; and that the subcommittee work in a spirit of collaboration.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tim Louis: The next motion is “Meeting Without a Quorum”. I move:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence published when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four members are present, including two members of the opposition parties and two members of the government party, but when travelling outside the Parliamentary Precinct, that the meeting begin after 15 minutes, regardless of members present.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tim Louis: The next motion is “Time for Opening Remarks and Questioning of Witnesses”. I move:

That witnesses be given five minutes for their opening statement; that whenever possible, witnesses provide the committee with their opening statement 72 hours in advance; that at the discretion of the Chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated six minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows for the first round: Conservative Party; Liberal Party; Bloc Québécois; New Democratic Party. For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows: Conservative Party, five minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes; Bloc Québécois, two and a half minutes; New Democratic Party, two and a half minutes; Conservative Party, five minutes; Liberal Party, five minutes.

• (1555)

The Chair: Are there any comments or questions?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tim Louis: The next section is labelled “Document Distribution”. I move:

That only the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the Committee provided the documents are in both official languages, and that the witnesses be advised accordingly.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tim Louis: Regarding “Working Meals”, I move:

That the clerk of the committee, at the discretion of the Chair, be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the committee and its subcommittees.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tim Louis: The next section is “Travel, Accommodation and Living Expenses of Witnesses”. I move:

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

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tim Louis: Regarding “Access to In Camera Meetings”, I move:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff member at in camera meetings and that one additional person from each House officer’s office be allowed to be present.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tim Louis: Regarding “Transcripts of In Camera Meetings”, I move:

That one copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the committee clerk’s office for consultation by members of the committee or by their staff; and that the analysts assigned to the committee also have access to the in camera transcripts.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tim Louis: Regarding “Notice of Motion”, I move:

That a 48-hour notice, interpreted as two nights, be required for any substantive motion to be moved in committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, provided that: (a) the notice be filed with the clerk of the committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; (b) the motion be distributed to members and the offices of the whips of each recog-

nized party in both official languages by the clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour; (c) notices received after the deadline hour or on non-business days be deemed to have been received during the next business day; and that when the committee is holding meetings outside the Parliamentary Precinct, no substantive motion may be moved.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tim Louis: The next motion is “Orders of Reference from the House Respecting Bills”. I move:

That in relation to orders of reference from the House respecting Bills,

(a) The clerk of the committee shall, upon the committee receiving such an order of reference, write to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee to invite those members to file with the clerk of the committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the committee consider;

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

(c) During the clause-by-clause consideration of a bill, the Chair shall allow a member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tim Louis: Regarding “Technical tests for witnesses”, I move:

That the clerk inform each witness who is to appear before the committee that the House administration support team must conduct technical tests to check the connectivity and the equipment used to ensure the best possible sound quality; and that the Chair advise the committee, at the start of each meeting, of any witness who did not perform the required technical tests.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1600)

Mr. Tim Louis: Finally, there is “Linguistic Review”. I move:

That all documents submitted for committee business that do not come from a federal department, members’ offices, or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau be sent for prior linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

If we’re done with the routine motions, I have two motions I’d like to propose.

[English]

The Chair: No, we haven’t. We have one more routine motion. I’m sorry.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: My apologies.

[*English*]

The Chair: I think you all have the motions before you. We're suggesting that if you want to go with this particular motion or you want to leave it out or whatever, it's optional.

Mr. Peter Julian: On a point of order, Madam Chair, to which motion are you referring? Are you referring to the one—

The Chair: It's the one on publishing online written responses to questions from the Department of Heritage.

Tim, did you not read this?

Mr. Tim Louis: No, Madam Chair. I don't believe I had that one. The last one I did was on linguistic review.

The Chair: Yes, I know, but I have this one here and I wondered about it. Have you not seen this?

It's my understanding that this was part of the routine motions that were put forward by the committee last year. If you want to continue with that and leave it there, fine. If you don't, as I said, it's optional, obviously.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I have it here, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall we go ahead, then?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Would you like me to read it?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, go right ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: The motion entitled Publishing Online Written Responses to Questions from the Department of Heritage reads as follows:

That the committee publish on the committee's website written responses to questions provided by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there any questions?

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Can we get this in writing? I don't have access to this.

The Chair: It seems I'm the only one—and Mr. Champoux—to have it. I don't think anybody else has it.

Shall I call the question to vote on this? Are you happy with what was read, or do you want to see it for yourselves?

Mr. Michael Coteau: Is it possible for us to get a copy if it's emailed?

The Clerk: Yes, it was emailed to your P9 accounts.

The Chair: This was mailed to your P9 accounts, for those of you who didn't have it.

Ms. Lewis, are you getting that as well?

• (1605)

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): I do have it. I did receive it, actually. Thank you.

The Chair: That's good.

Can somebody let me know when you get them so that we can go to the question or to comments?

Mr. Michael Coteau: Madam Chair, was this just sent at four o'clock, or was it sent earlier today or yesterday?

The Chair: Given that I have it in my routine motions, and given that the clerk explained that this had been done as a specific one and not as the normal routine motions last time, I think it was put on here as an optional motion. Obviously, we want to consider it, but that's why you don't have it, I think.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Okay. Considering that we don't have it, could we maybe recess for a few minutes so that we can actually read it and go through it?

It just came into the inbox now, a few minutes ago. Can we recess for about three minutes to go through it?

The Chair: Sure. We can suspend for a couple of minutes.

• (1605)

(Pause)

• (1610)

The Chair: I'm now ready to entertain a vote on this motion.

Mr. Champoux has already read it. Everyone is happy. We remember it. We all have it.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now you all have—

I'm sorry, Peter. Go ahead

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Forgive me, Madam Chair, but I think it was my turn to speak before the break.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, your hand was up first, and then Mr. Julian's.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: For some unknown reason, I'm not hearing people on this.

I'm sorry, Peter. What are you saying?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: I have a point of order because I have two routine motions to propose.

I would like to start with the first one.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have some routine motions to present as well. Is that it?

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes.

[*Translation*]

They've already been sent out to everyone.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. Will you read your first motion, Mr. Julian?

Mr. Peter Julian: The first one is this. I move:

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

I propose this routine motion, which comes out of the health committee. Michelle Rempel Garner proposed it there and the health committee adopted that structure. It has been very effective in terms of having the diversity of witnesses that are so important to the consideration by the committee for the reports that they're producing.

In this case, it would be a similar advantage for Canadian heritage, so I would like to propose this as part of our routine motions.

• (1615)

The Chair: Are we ready to discuss this motion?

Mr. Bittle.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I was under the impression—and someone could tell me otherwise—that the whips' and House leaders' offices had agreed that there wouldn't be additional amendments to this. It's disappointing that we're starting this off already violating that particular agreement.

Having been on committees—not as many as Mr. Julian—I haven't run into this problem before. Does it create a level of bureaucracy that is unnecessary for the clerks? Having dealt with many clerks throughout my six years here, it seems to have run well in terms of the witnesses that have been provided. The invitations go out and only a certain percentage of them are accepted. I doubt we are going to get into too many issues where we're summoning witnesses to appear before this committee.

I don't understand the necessity of this motion, especially in light of the agreement between the parties before we even arrived here. I think it is an unnecessary item. In my opinion, the clerks have done outstanding work in my six years here. Perhaps Mr. Julian disagrees.

We're also reliant on the schedules of the witnesses. Mr. Julian may want his witness to appear on Monday, and they may not be available until Wednesday. Do we not have the meeting on Monday, so that a partisan list of witnesses is available? I think the issue is, as long as the members are available to present the witnesses and those invitations go out, whether it really matters where in a two-hour segment they appear.

I can't support this motion.

The Chair: Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I respect, as always, Mr. Julian's proposal.

I think there's a question of proportionality. Historically, committees have had witnesses somewhat in proportion to the percentage of members they have in the House of Commons and on committees. This would say that each party is entitled to exactly the same

number of witnesses for every study and everything that we do, regardless of how many members on the committee and members in the House of Commons that party has. I don't agree with that. I would be prepared to think about it in specific contexts perhaps, but not in terms of the general rule for the committee. I don't think that's a fair rule.

I'm sorry. As the larger party, I don't agree with that.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Champoux.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I quite like what the honourable member Mr. Housefather just said. In other words, it may be possible to adopt the practice every now and again, but applying it as a general rule would be problematic, especially on this committee.

Mr. Julian said that the health committee had adopted a similar motion. Perhaps it works well for a committee like the Standing Committee on Health, but the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage sometimes deals with issues that have a much greater impact on Quebec or the French-speaking community. Members from Quebec, especially those from the Bloc Québécois, could have a greater interest in certain issues. As Mr. Bittle pointed out, a rule whereby each party invites one witness per two-hour witness panel could create an imbalance in regard to certain issues.

I have concerns, especially if we have to vote on this today. For that reason, I cannot support this motion now. I am not opposed to the idea of discussing it later or on a case-by-case basis, but at this time, I don't think this motion is well-suited to the heritage committee's needs.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Julian.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to say that everyone should care about official languages issues in the country. The member for Drummond can rest assured that the procedure for the selection of witnesses will indeed be sound. The reality is that the selection of witnesses should reflect the minority Parliament we are in.

The Standing Committee on Health adopted a motion to make the selection of witnesses fairer as far as the parties are concerned, and other committees will be adopting it as well. This practice is essential in a minority Parliament. If we don't adopt this motion, the government is going to select half of all the witnesses we invite, as is customary. That can be a drawback given the diverse range of witnesses we would like to hear from.

• (1620)

[English]

It is something that other committees are adopting, for one. It's something that Michelle Rempel Garner proposed in the health committee, and it has worked extremely well. We are in a minority Parliament. In a minority Parliament all of us have to work together. The idea that half the witnesses go to government and the other half goes to the opposition doesn't make as much sense in a minority Parliament. That's why a number of committees are now adopting this approach.

I have no intention of doing a filibuster, but I did want to respond to some of my colleagues' comments.

If there are no further speakers, of course, Madam Chair, you could proceed to the vote.

The Chair: I think we have a further speaker.

Go ahead, Mr. Nater.

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

I'll be brief. From the official opposition's standpoint we're comfortable using the "trust but verify" approach. We'll give it some time and see how the first study goes. If the witnesses come disproportionately from one party, then we can revisit it at that point. I think that, for the time being, we'll work with it as it is. Hopefully, this committee can work on a strong consensus basis. We can all invite the witnesses our party wishes to hear. I don't see a problem. We can go forward without this motion.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nater. I think we did pass something about consensus earlier on in the routine motions.

Are there any further comments, or any further discussion?

Mr. Julian's motion reads, "That each party represented on the committee be entitled to select one witness per two-hour witness panel."

Did you want the names read for a recorded division?

All right, let's do a division.

(Motion negatived: nays 10; yeas 1)

The Chair: I think we are almost unanimous in opposition. I would say that the motion fails.

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, it has indeed, Madam Chair. As you said, it was almost unanimous.

The Chair: I think some people have said that they would want to look at it again.

Mr. Peter Julian: It was defeated by an overwhelming margin, I think we would agree.

The other routine motion that I wanted to present I've also distributed to committee members. What that does is define, in a minority Parliament, the definition around when a committee can meet in camera, so it's something that can be more circumscribed.

It would read as follows:

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

(a) to consider a draft report;

(b) to attend briefings concerning national security;

(c) to consider lists of witnesses;

(d) for any other reason, with the unanimous consent of the committee.

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

The intention of this routine motion, Madam Chair, is simply to reduce the amount of time that's often taken, in a minority Parliament, to discuss when the committee should go in camera, by having this limited list. What it does is it saves time for the committee. It means that, essentially, we would be going in camera only for those reasons. Of course, that doesn't preclude at all the unanimous consent of the committee to do so.

I so move.

The Chair: Is there any discussion, debate, comment...?

Mr. Bittle.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Again, the concern is that this is something that was already discussed in terms of the routine motions that the parties would agree to, but... I have seen this motion in other committees before, and especially in a minority Parliament, I don't see the benefit. It's not like the government and the government members can force everything in camera. I think there's an agreement on all sides that it be used sparingly, but I've seen other instances where, again, in my limited experience....

Mr. Julian has been here a while longer, but I've been in camera with PROC, and I believe Mr. Nater was on the committee as well, where we discussed collective agreements. Could one member of one party simply say, "No, we're not going into an in camera session because there's a discussion of that"? On the same committee, we went in camera to meet with a police officer to protect his identity, as he or she was discussing issues regarding hate crimes. It wasn't an issue of national security, but it was an issue of personal security. Why would we allow one member the ability to prevent that witness from speaking?

Again, the government can't impose its will that everything be in camera and hide things that are unnecessary, but in carving it out and being so specific, we're giving opportunities...including for the government. If the opposition wants to hear from a particular witness on an issue of security or something, where they need to have their identity protected, one government member could say, "No, it needs to be out in the open."

I think we're setting up for failure and potentially preventing witnesses from being heard who should be heard in camera.

• (1625)

The Chair: Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Basically, to me, the core issue is what the motion would do. It would take away the right of the majority of the committee to ever vote to be in camera and subject that to the whim of one person on the committee at any time. I don't agree with that.

I think in camera meetings should be used sparingly. They should be used in limited contexts. I think we should try to agree on when we should be in camera and when not. If we run into a problem with that, we can try to arrange some type of resolution to that by coming to a general agreement.

The end result is that I don't agree with the principle of taking away the majority's right and imposing a unanimous requirement, except in context. I haven't had an opportunity to consider these three particular contexts, because I just got the motion, but I don't agree with the motion, at least right now.

Thank you.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion?

I would like to point out that Standing Order 67, specifically 67(2), considers a motion to go in public or in camera to be non-debatable and non-amendable.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, outlines this on page 1089:

Any member may move a motion to go from sitting in public to sitting in camera (and vice versa). The motion is decided immediately without debate or amendment.

Obviously, this is a practice that is.... Mr. Julian's motion would actually cancel that right.

Page 1089 also states:

In practice, committees often change from [in public to in camera] at the suggestion of the Chair, with the implied consent of the members.

I would suggest that the process outlined by Mr. Julian could be used more as a guide by the chair and the committee on how to proceed rather than as a rule. As members know, committees may adopt procedural rules to govern their proceedings, but only to the extent that they respect the higher authorities, particularly the Standing Orders. I just read to you from the Standing Orders.

I would rule this motion out of order, so to speak, because of those decisions, because it goes against the Standing Orders.

Peter, what would you like to do? Would you like to withdraw it, or would you like to take a vote?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, it is perfectly in order. I'd like to hear from my colleagues on the Conservative and Bloc side, of course.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Chair, just to clarify, have you ruled this out of order, or is it still on the table?

The Chair: I just ruled it out of order, but Mr. Julian wanted to.... I'm always guided by the committee's will. If I get nobody objecting, I will continue to let this—

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Chair, I'm so sorry to intervene, but shouldn't the process then be, since you have ruled it out of order, that Mr. Julian should move to overrule your ruling, and then there should be a vote on that?

• (1630)

Mr. Peter Julian: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

I think as a collegial approach, hearing from my colleagues on the Conservative and Bloc side would be helpful to all of us and instructive to all of us. I think if their feeling is similar to that of my colleagues on the Liberal side, that is a different road for me to take than if they are supportive of the motion.

The Chair: Given that I ruled the motion out of order, I guess you are challenging the chair and, therefore, wish for us to hear from others.

I will suspend for a minute so that you can talk amongst yourselves and decide what you want to do. The chair is challenged, so I will have to be guided by the committee.

We're suspending for a minute.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1630)

Mr. Peter Julian: Thanks, Madam Chair.

Having spoken to my colleagues from all sides, I will withdraw that motion.

(Motion withdrawn)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Julian.

This motion is not going to be voted on so we shall move on.

Monsieur Champoux.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have two motions that are more in the spirit of the actual work of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, work we are all eager to tackle in a meaningful way.

The first concerns the situation facing artists, something the Standing Committee on Finance has talked a lot about in the past few days, further to its examination of Bill C-2. We, as the heritage committee, can do something, and that is studying a piece of federal legislation, the Status of the Artist Act. Quebec has a statute with some very helpful provisions.

The motion reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee undertake a study on the Status of the Artist Act and its impact on improving basic working conditions for artists; that the Committee invite officials from the heritage department, tax experts and other stakeholders and groups from the culture sector to follow up on this issue and that the Committee hold a minimum of four (4) meetings to that end; and that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

• (1635)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

There is a motion on the floor by Monsieur Champoux. Does anyone want to comment?

Mr. Louis.

Mr. Tim Louis: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a point of clarification. I thought that the translation came up as a minimum of four meetings and then written down was a matter of a minimum of two meetings.

I just want clarification.

The Chair: I'm sorry. My thing has gone off again. I can't hear a word. I'm sorry. I'm just hearing you from the end of the room.

Can you repeat what you just said, Tim?

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I think he figured it out.

[English]

Mr. Tim Louis: I read from the wrong side of the page. I apologize. I'm okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Are you good? Okay. Thanks.

Are there any comments or clarification?

Mr. Housefather.

[Translation]

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Can you hear me now, Madam Chair?

[English]

The Chair: Yes, I can.

[Translation]

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I'm usually in favour of what the honourable member Mr. Champoux proposes, but I think this motion needs some additions in the way of the sports and heritage sectors, which are outside the culture sector.

Perhaps we could all submit our motions by a certain date to have the subcommittee look at them.

I completely agree with making these issues the focus of our first study.

If Mr. Champoux and the rest of the committee are in agreement, we could all submit our related motions for the subcommittee to review and make recommendations at its first meeting in January.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Chair—

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

Excuse me, Monsieur Champoux.

We'll go to Mr. Nater first.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Mr. Housefather, for that suggestion.

I think that would be an approach that the official opposition would agree to. I know we have a number of studies that we would be interested in undertaking and, frankly, it actually dovetails somewhat nicely with some suggestions from Mr. Champoux. We would be willing to work on that, but there, obviously, are certain things we would like to see included as well.

I think the suggestion of submitting all of our suggestions by a certain date and having either the subcommittee or the full committee—frankly, if doesn't matter to me one way or the other—do that review with committee business at some point at a future meeting....

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nater.

We have a motion on the floor from Mr. Champoux.

If Mr. Champoux would like to withdraw it, we could then entertain another motion like Mr. Nater's. I notice everybody is nodding their heads around the room.

Am I getting a consensus?

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Chair, may I respond to the members' comments?

[English]

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I completely appreciate what the two honourable members said; their reasoning is entirely valid and relevant. We've got a highly critical situation on our hands. Last year, the committee studied the pandemic's impact on the culture industry, and the situation is still dire today. There has been precious little in the way of help. A few programs were introduced, but self-employed cultural workers were pretty much left to fend for themselves. With the end of the Canada recovery benefit in October, they have no financial support. They have had no help since October 23, and many of them are going to have to rely on food banks to get through the holidays.

This is about making sure self-employed workers and artists in the culture sector don't end up living in poverty whenever society is in the grip of a public health emergency or anything similar to the present situation. These men and women do not qualify for employment insurance. I realize the program does not fall within the heritage committee's scope, but we are talking about people who are struggling, so we are trying to find a solution to the problem they keep coming up against.

I am entirely open to extending the model we arrive at to workers in the sports sector and other sectors that fall within the committee's purview, but I think the committee needs to prioritize this study.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Champoux.

What I'm hearing though is that everyone would prefer for this to follow the procedure set out by sending it to the subcommittee on procedure. Everyone is agreeing with the substance of your motion, but they want to amend it. They want to improve it, and they want to increase it. However, there are other motions out there that haven't been considered by this group.

Everyone seemed to be nodding when the suggestion was made not to remove your motion but to send all the motions to the subcommittee, so that it can consider them. We can then deal with motions from the subcommittee.

Does that sound like an answer to the bit of a problem here?

Mr. Champoux.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: That's fine with me, but along the same lines, I move—

[*English*]

The Chair: Does everyone agree to move the motions to the subcommittee?

Thank you.

Mr. Champoux, did you want to say something?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I imagine the conclusion will be the same in relation to my second motion.

Are we moving all of our motions here so they can then be dealt with by the subcommittee, as you suggested?

[*English*]

The Chair: The next step is to set a date and a time for those motions to be considered by the subcommittee and sent back to the main committee. I don't even know if we have the subcommittee composed yet. I don't know who is going to be named from the different parties to the subcommittee. Obviously, you are, Mr. Champoux.

The bottom line is that we need to send everybody's motions and set a date. All motions should be sent by a certain date to the clerk for consideration by the subcommittee.

Can we do that? Would somebody like to move that?

We have to get a date, not December 25, please. Are there any suggestions? We need that to move forward.

Mr. Champoux.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I believe the committee is meeting on Wednesday, Madam Chair.

Do you think it's possible to have the subcommittee set up and a meeting held by then?

[*English*]

The Chair: I would have to defer to the parties to see whether that would be possible.

Would you like to suspend again and discuss it amongst yourselves so that we can get a date?

I'll suspend for about a minute for everyone to discuss what they want to do.

• (1640)

(Pause)

• (1645)

The Chair: We are resumed. I think the first person on my list is Mr. Champoux.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Further to our discussion, I think we can move that members send their motions to the clerk by January 20, 2022.

The subcommittee will meet the following week, or thereabouts, to get everything ready for the committee's return on January 31, 2022. That gives everyone until January 20, 2022 to submit their motions, with the subcommittee meeting the week after.

[*English*]

The Chair: To clarify, for everyone's benefit, I understand that everyone has agreed you will send the motions to the clerk by January 20. The subcommittee on agenda and procedure will meet the following week, and everyone will be ready to resume when the main committee meets again after January 31.

Is that clear? The time on January 20 is close of business day, 4 p.m. Are we clear on that?

I'm getting nods, so I'm going to ask all if I can get consensus on this. Does everyone agree? Is there anyone disagreeing with this?

That's good. We can move on then.

I think we have discussed everything we need to discuss until now. I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Chair, before we go, I've been harping for six years on this, and, unfortunately, it took the pandemic to have this. Other than the Minister of Canadian Heritage and department officials, there is no need for any guest to be live in person anymore. We must continue the virtual meetings.

We've seen this in the last 20 months. We can save a lot of money for the Government of Canada. My wish would be that, when you're thinking of bringing people in to committee, they understand that they have to have access to the Internet and we move forward from there. That's other than the department officials and the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The Chair: Is this a motion?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I don't have it down on paper, so it isn't.

The Chair: Do you want to...?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Chair, when the committee gets together in January, we need to be aware of this situation. That helps everybody for cleaning. That helps everybody moving forward.

That's just me, though.

• (1650)

The Chair: This is with regard to witnesses. I think we passed one of the routine motions that basically said that witnesses should be able to meet virtually. They should have all of the right equipment, etc., and be able to send everything in both official languages. I think we set that up with one of our motions.

What Kevin is saying is to make sure we don't bring a lot of people in. Who knows where we will be next year, so I think that's a sane motion.

I would like to hear if anyone wants to comment on it, or shall we just accept it for the committee to think about and the clerk to listen to?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, I completely agree with my Conservative colleague, and I'm glad he's such a strong supporter of a virtual Parliament. I certainly share that.

This was part of the motion that was adopted in Parliament. Ministers and departmental officials have the ability to meet physically in person or to meet virtually, but witnesses would be part of virtual testimony. I completely, absolutely agree. It makes more sense for a whole range of reasons, including the reduction in costs.

It's not often that I'm in complete agreement with my Conservative colleague, but in this case I definitely am.

The Chair: That's very true, Mr. Julian. It was passed in the House of Commons, and that was a kind of an "ouch" moment there.

Now perhaps Monsieur Champoux wants to speak.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I completely agree, just as I did when Mr. Waugh put forward the motion a few months ago, at the height of the pandemic. It's still raging on, so I think we should encourage the virtual appearance of witnesses.

However, some witnesses use their appearance before a committee as an opportunity to arrange meetings on Parliament Hill, so they may wish to appear in person, and we shouldn't deny ourselves the possibility of meeting with them in person if that is their preference.

That said, I wholly agree that we should give preference to virtual participation, especially during the pandemic. Another benefit is the cost savings. I do think we should keep the door open to those who wish to appear in person, in keeping with the public health rules, of course.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Champoux. We reduce the costs and also the risk.

Shall the committee and the clerk take this under advisement for future meetings, given that the House of Commons also passed the same idea?

Does anyone have anything else they want to bring up?

Okay, I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I move that we adjourn.

The Chair: Thank you, Michael.

I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

This was a good example of collaboration and co-operation by this committee. That's an auspicious beginning. Thank you.

This meeting is adjourned.

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