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Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi



Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1735)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)): Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, June 20, 2022, the committee is commencing its study on sexual and reproductive health and the rights of women globally.

It is now my pleasure to welcome to the committee, from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, two officials who we're very happy to have with us here today. First, we have Mr. Peter MacDougall, who is the assistant deputy minister, global issues and development. We're also happy to have with us here today Ms. Tanya Trevors, who is the director of health and rights of women and girls.

Mr. MacDougall, you will go first. You will be provided five minutes for your opening remarks. We would be grateful if you could manage to keep close to five minutes, and then we will proceed with Ms. Trevors.

Mr. MacDougall, the floor is yours.

Mr. Peter MacDougall (Assistant Deputy Minister, Global Issues and Development, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to be here with you today to speak in front of the committee and to share the insights on the work being done to implement the Government of Canada's policy direction for advancing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights globally.

[Translation]

Over the past decade, Canada has been recognized as a global leader in supporting the health and rights of women, children and youth. During its G7 presidency in 2010, Canada led the launch of the Muskoka Initiative on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, which leveraged over \$9.6 billion U.S. in new commitments from other countries. This funding has reduced child mortality and improved the lives of families, and has laid the foundation for further donor and country investments and priorities in global health.

[English]

In 2017, with the introduction of Canada's feminist international assistance policy, Canada maintained its support for MNCH but also stepped up its investments in sexual and reproductive health and rights, recognizing that promoting rights-based, open and inclusive societies is an effective way to save lives and to foster prosperity, peace and sustainability.

Canada committed \$650 million to the "Her Voice, Her Choice" initiative between 2017 and 2020, which supported 189 projects delivered in 65 countries and helped make a significant difference in the lives of millions of women, adolescents and children.

[Translation]

In 2019, based on the results and lessons learned from the Muskoka Her Voice Her Choice initiative, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made an historic commitment of \$1.4 billion per year over ten years to support the health and rights of women, children and adolescents around the world.

Of this total funding, \$700 million is dedicated to promoting global sexual and reproductive health and rights, focusing on four key neglected areas. These areas were identified through extensive consultations with Canadian and international experts and civil society organizations. They include family planning and modern contraception, safe abortion and post-abortion care services, comprehensive age-appropriate sexuality education, and sexual and reproductive health and rights promotion activities.

Preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence are also important components of Canadian sexual and reproductive health and rights programming.

[English]

Canada's 10-year commitment to global health and rights is unprecedented in its scope and length, underscoring the need for global leadership and voice to stand up on these issues.

Extensive input from Canadian and international experts and partners in 2016 during the development of the FIAP, combined with scientific and programmatic evidence outlined in the 2018 Guttmacher-Lancet commission has demonstrated how investments in comprehensive SRHR are critical for advancing the sustainable development goals of providing gender equality and ensuring economic prosperity.

We know that supporting a fair and equal world in which women and girls have the right to make decisions about their own bodies will generate social and economic benefits for decades to come.

[*Translation*]

The Guttmacher Institute's 2019 report, "Adding it up", calls the impact of global investments in sexual and reproductive health and rights programs significant. These investments can reduce unwanted pregnancy rates by 68%, unsafe abortions by 72% and maternal deaths by 62%. That is why I am pleased to report that Canada is making good progress on its existing commitments.

In 2020-21, Canada provided \$489 million to support initiatives related to sexual and reproductive health and rights. This funding directly enabled more than 4.5 million people to access sexual and reproductive health and rights services in 29 countries.

• (1740)

[*English*]

I look forward to taking your questions and sharing more about the important work that Canada is undertaking in this sector.

Thank you.

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

I understand there's only one witness making opening remarks here, but of course members can ask either official any questions they have. For the first round of questions, the time allotted is six minutes. The first member is MP Epp.

The floor is yours.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to cede my time to Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to move a motion, and I'll explain why after I've moved it. The motion is:

That the committee report to the House that, because Nord Stream 1 is no longer supplying gas to Europe due to a blast that created a 50-metre hole in the pipeline, because the granting of a waiver for the export of Gazprom turbines sends the wrong message to Russia about western support for sanctions, and because the Government of Ukraine and Canadians have requested the waiver be revoked, the committee calls on the Government of Canada to revoke the waiver to Russian sanctions granted for the export of Gazprom turbines by January 5, 2023.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair, on relevance. I don't think a member is allowed to present a motion that is completely irrelevant to the study. I remind the member and all members that we have just begun a study on women's reproductive and health rights. While I understand that the member opposite has no interest in it and, in fact, is the only one who voted against this study, the rest of us care about women's reproductive and health rights and his motion is out of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I'm happy to respond to the substantive points. Can I respond?

The Chair: I think she has a very good point as to relevance.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, this motion is on notice. It's been on notice, and I'm able to move any motion that's been on notice. If there are other points of order, they can be raised.

Thank you, Ms. Bendayan. I anticipated that there might be further points of order. I will do my best to speak to the motion for as long as members allow me to until I've concluded my opening remarks on it.

Mr. Chair, we have unfinished business at this committee when it comes to the issue of the Gazprom turbines. We had a special order to study the issue of Gazprom turbines as a result of an agreement by all opposition parties that was supposed to begin—and I actually hoped would have been concluded—in the summer. That discussion began—

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, with respect, which I think should be duly accorded to senior officials from the Government of Canada, it may be appropriate for you to suggest that, if they would like to leave, they may leave, because I have a feeling this could go on for quite a while. I say that with the great regret that someone has decided that the issue of women's reproductive rights is not important.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I would like the witnesses to stay for what it's worth, Mr. Chair. I'm ever hopeful that the will of one member will not overrule the rest of the members at this committee, and I would like to get back to questions.

The Chair: Your point is well taken, Mr. Oliphant. Let's just see how this proceeds, but obviously we should extend every courtesy to our two witnesses, who have taken the time to come here and appear before the committee. Let's proceed and see how things go from there.

Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Frankly we've heard more arguments made against my motion in points of order than I've actually had time to make in favour of my motion. Please let me speak to the motion substantively, and maybe members will want to disagree with those arguments. However, as has been discussed previously, points of order are not necessarily the place to make those substantive arguments.

The issue of Gazprom turbines is one that this committee began to consider in the summer, and it was an urgent matter. All of the opposition parties used the process under Standing Order 106(4) to—

• (1745)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, now we are getting into the historical background of a study that we already undertook, that we already engaged in. In fact, there is a draft report in front of me, which we never got to, thanks to the member opposite.

Mr. Chair, I would suggest that the member opposite needs to remain relevant and that we do not need to hear—as all of us were in this room doing the very study he is referring to—a history of the turbine issue.

I also, Mr. Chair, would invite you to recognize that there are still two witnesses here waiting to speak on women's reproductive and health rights, and that this is clearly a tactic in order to avoid the topic, which I remind the member—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, this is clearly not a point of order, and I am not being allowed to finish a sentence.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan:—is women's reproductive and health rights, not what he is talking about. It is about women's reproductive and health rights, and I will continue to make points of order until he agrees to discuss women's reproductive and health rights.

The Chair: I will give it back to you—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, if I could actually raise a distinct point of order, I'm looking forward to getting back into my explanation for this motion, but the member did make certain insinuations about things that may or may not have happened in camera. That is very clearly against the rules. I hope the member would stick to the rules and be kept to order on them by the chair.

I am happy to discuss what was or was not adopted in camera, because that is a matter of public record that will show up in the minutes.

Mr. Chair, we have unfinished business when it comes to the issue of Gazprom turbines. There was a motion adopted in June with respect to a study on abortion, because Liberals—

The Chair: Dr. Fry, please proceed.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. On a point of order, Mr. Genuis gave notice of motion. He called it that, which is within the rules. He can do that. He is now actually debating his motion, and I want to call us back to order. The order of the day, the business of this committee at this point in time, is to deal with the witnesses and question them on the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to ask you to actually bring this meeting back to order.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Fry.

She is absolutely correct. You did have a motion, but now you are getting into arguments.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I am moving a motion, and now I'm presenting arguments in support of the motion.

Dr. Hedy Fry: No, you gave notice of motion.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: No, I am moving a motion that I had previously given notice for. The notice of motion was provided on Friday, November 18, and I am now speaking to the motion that I have now moved. This motion is now on the floor.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, I would ask that you bear in mind what the subject matter today is. You have been allowed to introduce

your motion, but I would ask that you respect our witnesses and that you not engage in argument—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you. I am not being offered any indulgences that go beyond the clear parameters of the rules established, which are that a member may move a motion that has been on notice for 48 hours. The requirement that the motion be in line with the topic currently being discussed applies in the cases of motions for which there is not notice. It does not apply in the case of motions for which there is notice.

When there is 48 hours' notice, members are able to move motions and speak to the motions. That is what I'm doing. I am moving a motion. I have already moved a motion with respect to Gazprom turbines and calling on the Government of Canada to revoke the waiver of Russian sanctions granted for the export of Gazprom turbines by January 5, 2023.

I believe this is an urgent matter, which is why I think it is important to bring it up. I would have liked to see the committee pronounce on this matter much earlier, which is why a different motion that dealt with this issue was moved previously. That motion was filibustered by members of the government.

It's why we had a study ongoing on the issue of Gazprom turbines, and I had hoped that today would be the day when we approved a committee report to the House dealing with the issue of Gazprom turbines. That report was not approved—

● (1750)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, that same member has accused other members of this committee of referring to things that occurred in camera and discussions that occurred in camera, and he has just done exactly the same thing. I would remind the member opposite that we are to be studying at this very moment women's reproductive and health rights, and that he is filibustering that discussion because he does not agree that women should have their health protected. I understand his position. I understand that he doesn't care about women's reproductive and health rights and that other members have been asked to come in and lend support to that member so that he may continue on filibustering this discussion.

Mr. Chair, I would invite you to bring this meeting back to order and allow us to ask questions of the witnesses who are before us on the study of women's reproductive and health rights.

The Chair: Thanks, Ms. Bendayan.

Mr. Genuis, as you are fully aware, we have witnesses appearing before us here at committee who are here to be questioned by the members about reproductive rights. You're fully aware of that, so I would ask that you actually factor that in as well while you're speaking to extend some courtesy to the witnesses.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I do want to respond to the point of order, before I continue with my remarks, by noting that there is a difference between referring to matters that are covered in camera and referring to matters that will appear in the minutes of the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting report what was agreed to, and it is no violation of the in camera rule to point out that something is not in the minutes. I am able to refer to the fact that the adoption of reports was not agreed to during the in camera portion of the committee because what is agreed to and by extension what is not agreed to can be determined by looking at the minutes.

What I cannot do and would not do is cast aspersions about why in particular that did or didn't happen or make claims about what was said during the in camera portion of the meeting. Respectfully, Ms. Bendayan made many false accusations about me during her last intervention. One of them was procedural and others were not, but I hope you will agree with me on at least the procedural one, Mr. Chair.

Again, I would like to be able to proceed with at least a mouthful of commentary on this motion, which I think is important. The committee has before it unfinished business with respect to the issue of Gazprom turbines. That is why it's important for the committee to complete that unfinished business. It is certainly a matter of public record that Conservatives have tried repeatedly to schedule and seek the completion of the discussion of the Gazprom turbine issue.

In fact the last time the Conservatives sought to resume and complete the discussion of the Gazprom turbine issue, we had witnesses, and one of those witnesses was me. I was here testifying on my private member's bill and nonetheless a member of our caucus moved to resume consideration of the Gazprom issue.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, point of order on relevance. It is clearly irrelevant to the motion that my colleague is speaking to.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: No, it is not. It is clearly exactly on the topic, which is—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: He is referring to his private member's bill, which is not relevant to the Gazprom motion that he has moved.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: —the importance of the Gazprom issue.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, can we please hear Ms. Bendayan?

Ms. Bendayan.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: The member's private member's bill is certainly not relevant to the Gazprom motion that he has put forward. He is now just grasping at straws in order to fill time. It is quite unfortunate and very boring to hear, whereas the rest of us would like to get to the study that was scheduled for today, which is on women's reproductive and health rights. My point of order is on relevance.

• (1755)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bendayan.

We now go back to Mr. Genuis.

I would ask you, Mr. Genuis, to please bear in mind that we have witnesses here. That's the first thing I would ask you to bear in mind. Second, we have interpreters too, so bear that in mind.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm certainly grateful for the work done by our interpreters. I will continue speaking to my motion in accordance with the rules, as I have been doing.

The committee has been seeking to complete its work. Many members of this committee have been seeking to complete the work on the Gazprom issue. When the committee adopted a motion in June to consider, at the insistence of the Liberal Party, the issue of abortion laws in other countries—which was something that the Liberal Party was very keen to have discussed—we expressed the view that the committee should at the very least complete its existing work on the issues before it, which at the time were, first and foremost, Ukraine but also vaccine equity and the issue of Taiwan.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The member keeps referring to the motion for the study as the abortion study, and that is incorrect. This is a study on reproductive rights for women, the full range of reproductive rights and reproductive health. It is appalling to me that he is once again, one out of eleven members, overtaking the will of the committee and trying to impose his will upon us. It is appalling to me that he does not believe that the reproductive rights—not abortion but the reproductive rights of—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, can you enforce the rules?

This is not a point of order, and you know it.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I would ask, Mr. Chair, that you explain to the member—because perhaps he didn't read the motion initially—that the motion is in fact on reproductive rights for women around the world. It is—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Can you enforce the rules, Mr. Chair?

Ms. Heather McPherson: It is in fact a motion on reproductive rights, the full range [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, the first rule is that if you have not been recognized, you can't speak.

I'd like to hear from Ms. McPherson.

Ms. McPherson.

A voice: She is having a technical issue.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I'd like to speak on Ms. McPherson's point of order until she is able to come back.

I'm wondering if there's a link between this. Would Mr. Genuis consider understanding the conflict-related gender-based violence in Ukraine, which is causing women and girls to be raped on a daily basis, thus causing unintended pregnancies in a war zone? Would he be open to considering that to be perhaps a way of recognizing the interrelatedness of the very important issue of reproductive rights and also the war in Ukraine? It is a situation in which women will die from having unsafe abortions of unintended pregnancies because Russian soldiers have raped them.

Would he consider that as a way of opening up the discussion that brings in the two concepts?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oliphant.

I'm sure the members will recall that while we were hearing from witnesses for the Ukraine study this issue did come up on several occasions; hence the interest of many members to proceed with an examination of the witnesses here on the issue of reproductive rights.

I would ask, Mr. Genuis, that you refer to this study using the correct terminology. Thank you.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I frankly find your activity thus far to be extremely curious—

• (1800)

The Chair: Likewise, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: We've had members who have sought points of order and have gone on at length without reference to—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, what is this? It is neither an explanation of the member's motion, nor a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I haven't finished a sentence in the entire time I've been speaking.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: We all feel so terrible for you.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, she has a point of order.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, my point of order is that Mr. Genuis is not addressing his motion, nor is he raising a point of order, so he no longer has the floor, in my view.

Mr. Chair, perhaps you would like to rule on that.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, could you get to the point, please?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was speaking to this motion with respect to the Gazprom turbines. My belief, which has been consistent since the beginning of the committee's work on this matter, is that it is urgently required, for the security of Ukraine, to revoke the waiver of Russian sanctions that was granted by this government.

Mr. Oliphant believes that this is not the priority for Ukraine.

The Chair: Dr. Fry, go ahead on a point of order.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I understand clearly that Mr. Genuis has the right to speak to his motion, for which he said he gave due notice. Again, I'll refer to the point of order. Mr. Genuis just spoke of the security of Ukraine. Mr. Chair, I am saying, on a point of order, that part of that security of

Ukraine has to do with the access of Ukrainian women—especially the refugees, and 90% of refugees are Ukrainian women—to prenatal care delivery, postpartum care and/or abortion following the rape by Russian soldiers, which we clearly heard about from the Ukrainian ambassador when she presented to us during our study.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Is this a point of order, Mr. Chair?

Hon. Hedy Fry: This is very relevant to what Mr. Genuis is speaking about. He needs to understand that security is more than guns, ammunition and energy security. It has to do with human security.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Fry.

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm happy to respond, in due course, to the substantive arguments being made under the guise of points of order. Before I do that, I want to clearly underline why I think it's important to move this motion.

We previously moved motions that, I believe, had the support of the committee on the urgent need to revoke the permit. Why is it urgently needed to revoke the permit? It's because this committee has heard, from various sanctions experts, that, when you have nations creating a kind of Swiss cheese sanction regime designed to advance their own particular economic interests by offering holes in some places and—

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Chair, I'm concerned there is a disproportionate amount of time being taken, within this committee, by certain members. I wonder whether you could provide us with an accounting of the actual number of minutes each member has spoken over the past year, so we can get an estimation, even simply. It seems not all committee members are being given the same ability to represent their constituents and [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] this committee.

The Chair: I'm not quite sure whether that is possible, but I undertake to bring it up with the clerk and analyst after this meeting is over, in order to see whether that is possible, Ms. McPherson.

However, I would like to tell Mr. Genuis that, as we've heard from members here, there is some repetition.

I would like to refer you to page 1059 of the rules and procedure, which read as follows, Mr. Genuis: “the Chair may, at his or her discretion, interrupt a member whose observations and questions are repetitive or”—as has been pointed out by one of the members—“are unrelated to the matter before the committee.”

The floor is yours again, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, if this is a hack job, where you decided to interrupt me at a certain point, that's just going to happen, but the reality is that I have not been, in any sense, repetitive. I've been speaking specifically to the Gazprom issue, while you've allowed lengthy points of order, which are not even attempts at points of order, to repeatedly interrupt me.

I will continue to speak very precisely on the issue of Gazprom. I have no doubt you will do what you came in with the direction to do, regardless of whether or not I am on topic or repetitive.

Now, Mr. Chair, I'd like to—

• (1805)

The Chair: On the direction of whom, Mr. Genuis?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have no idea, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Therefore, please withdraw that statement.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I would now like to speak to the issue of why it is important this permit be revoked.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order. It is with respect to the motion being debated today.

I'm having trouble understanding the motion. I would like you to rule whether it is a motion that is, grammatically, actually presentable to the committee.

Look at the motion very clearly, if you have it in front of you. The first clause is “That the committee report to the House that”, then it continues on with some statements, and then it says “the committee calls on the Government of Canada to”. I'm not understanding the actual grammar of that sentence.

Are we reporting to the House that, and calling on the Government of Canada to, revoke the waiver, or are they two separate things? The actual motion does not make sense.

[*Translation*]

It may be correct in French, but not in English.

[*English*]

It does not make sense grammatically, because there are missing words in the motion. It really is a problem. You can say, “That the committee report to the House” those things and “the committee calls on”, but there is no “and”.

It seems to me that the motion is probably not in order as such, because it doesn't make sense. There's no conjunction. I am the grammar police and I've done it many times, because, if we don't present our motions with correct grammar, the House won't understand what we're actually doing.

Are we reporting something to the House, or are we calling upon the government, through the House, to do it? If it's both, the motion should be worked on. The member may need some time to work on the motion to get it to say what he would like it to say.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: If I could respond to the same point of order, Mr. Chair, I'll make a couple of observations.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, wait one second. I would like to consult with the clerk.

Would all the members agree that we dismiss the witnesses out of respect? Is everyone okay with that?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: No, I am not okay with that. It is your decision, Chair, but I [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Bendayan.

Mr. Genuis, the floor is yours.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I guess this can be substantive commentary as opposed to... In defence of the linguistic structure of the motion, I would make two points.

Number one, even a badly drafted motion is still in order; however, I will not concede that it is a badly drafted motion. I think it's quite grammatically correct. The way you test the grammatical correctness of a motion with a lengthy subclause is you determine if the motion reads correctly in the absence of the subclause. In the absence of the subclause, the motion would simply read, “That the committee report to the House that...the committee calls on the Government of Canada to revoke the waiver to Russian sanctions granted for the export of Gazprom turbines by January 5, 2023.”

Insofar as it repeats the word “committee”, it might not be as poetic as Mr. Oliphant prefers, but it is entirely grammatically proper, and I think it reads more poetically in the presence of the subclause, which, of course, is part of the motion. To say, “That the committee report to the House...that the committee calls on the Government of Canada to revoke the waiver”, etc. is perfectly grammatically correct and I, of course, stand by it both as a piece of language and as a substantive proposition.

The Chair: Is there anything further on that point of order?

Yes, Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Does the committee have the authority to call on the government to revoke, or is it the House that could do it upon the recommendation of the standing committee? We are afforded a certain responsibility under the Standing Orders about what we do, and what we do is make reports to the House and call upon the House to do certain things.

I don't think the grammar works.

• (1810)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: This is consistent with the form used in most of the recommendations that our report has adopted.

One doesn't need power to be able to "call on". Anybody can call on anybody to do anything. One needs power and authority to be able to order someone to do something or require someone to do something, but an individual member of Parliament can call on the government to do something, and certainly a committee can call on the government to do something. It doesn't mean the government has to do it, but this is the committee simply reporting to the House its exhortation to the government to take a particular action. Certainly committees are well within their rights to exhort governments or anybody else to do anything. They are more constrained in their power to give instructions.

Having said that and noting the consistency of the form of the motion with most if not all of the kinds of recommendations that I've dealt with when these matters have been considered before the committee before, those involved motions to consider matters, I will now, hopefully—

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): I have a point of order.

Mr. Chair, the motion that's put forward says that it's an urgent matter. The expiration of the gas turbine sanction waiver is January 5, which is under 29 days. Repairing or not repairing a turbine for a pipeline that has blown apart is, I think, less important than a study of the reproductive rights of women.

If the Conservative Party, members of the Conservative Party or this member thinks that the repair or non-repair of a blown up pipeline thousands of miles away that has a permit expiring in less than four weeks is more important than the reproductive rights of women, I think they should bring witnesses to that effect and say that officially, rather than going around and about in this long way to say that. Just be blatant and say that we're against sexual reproductive rights of women and that we don't want to study it.

I don't know why we need to go on a diatribe to belittle this while we have witnesses here. We've had a motion that was put forward in June. We have opposition parties and a governing party all wanting this. In fact, I think 10 out of 11—if I'm right—members have approved this study, so I think this is very irrelevant. The argument that it's urgent is also irrelevant, as I just said. There is no pipeline to repair. The waiver that was given is expiring in four weeks. In fact, if we did a study right now, it would probably not be published until the waiver is already done.

I think that we should go on to committee business and that this proposed motion should be put out of order.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sarai.

Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

I have a great deal of respect for Mr. Sarai, but he essentially concluded his substantive arguments against the motion by saying that he thinks it should be ruled out of order on that basis.

Motions are not ruled out of order by chairs on the basis of their merits. They're ruled out of order by the chairs on the basis of rules. They are perhaps voted for or against by committees on the basis of their merits.

We previously put forward a motion on the Gazprom issue. It was members of the Liberal caucus who filibustered that motion and prevented it from being brought to a vote. We sought to resume consideration on that motion, and we weren't able to do so because of the time. The Liberals and the NDP did not agree to resume consideration on it, despite the fact that we had heard directly from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress that they felt very strongly that we should return to this issue.

As far as the urgency, I have said I believe this motion is urgent. It's notable that the word "urgent" isn't used in the text of the motion itself. Do I think this is an urgent matter? Yes, I do. We are talking about an ongoing war. We're talking about the integrity of the global sanctions regime, and we're talking about the messages that are sent by exceptions to that sanction regime.

Everybody knows it's true that the turbine that was sent on the basis of the exemption is not currently in the pipeline, but that doesn't make the—

Hon. Hedy Fry: I have a point of order.

I'm listening to the member speak. I think none of us in this committee is fooled by the idea that this is not just a filibuster, but I wanted to speak to the issue of urgency the member brings up.

What is more urgent? Is it women, whose babies are dying and who cannot have access to reproductive health care and who are refugees from Ukraine, or a pipeline waiver, which, as Mr. Sarai pointed out, is going to expire within the next three weeks?

When I was in Poland, the Ukrainian delegation spoke to the urgent issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights as being one of the number one issues they wanted everyone to address.

That's just if we want to talk about urgency and about facts. Thank you.

• (1815)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Fry.

We'll go back to Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In terms of what constitutes urgent priorities or not for the Ukrainian government, which is principally responsible for this ongoing war effort, this committee has certainly been asked repeatedly by the Ukrainian government, as well as by leading diaspora organizations, to revoke this permit. In terms of what is critical for the war effort, I think it's a misstatement of the issue to diminish this to being just a pipeline.

This is about the question of the integrity of the global sanctions regime. The sanctions regime is going to be foundational to the question of who actually wins this war at the end of the day. Ukraine has done well in the context of the war, but we should not presume that any outcome is inevitable.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Hedy Fry: I have a point of privilege, Mr. Chair. Did I understand that the honourable member has just impugned my integrity?

I was in Poland and I listened to the leader—the President of Ukraine—ask us specifically to deal with the humanitarian issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights as a priority issue. I am not making it up, Mr. Chair.

The honourable member was not in Ukraine. Never once did anyone talk about gas turbines as being urgent at that meeting and that meeting was two weeks ago.

The Chair: Thank you for that clarification, Dr. Fry.

We now go to Ms. Bendayan.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was simply going to raise—as the member opposite attempts to paraphrase or speak on behalf of the Ukrainian government, as I understand him to have just done—that we also heard from the ambassador. In fact, the ambassador of Ukraine indicated that rape was being used as a weapon of war. That is directly linked to the study that we were supposed to be engaged in today on women's reproductive and health rights.

If the Conservative member would like to address some of the concerns that we heard in the testimony from the Ukrainian ambassador, I suggest that he make the full list of all of those concerns, which does include protecting women and protecting women's rights. I would urge the member opposite....

In fact, Mr. Chair, it's been now almost an hour that we've listened to the member present his motion. Could we vote on the motion that the member is using as a filibuster technique to avoid the topic of women's reproductive and health rights? I would be very happy to vote on his motion, so that we could get down to business.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bendayan.

I would ask the member to make all the arguments he thinks are necessary, and then, should he agree, we can proceed with a vote.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

I have barely spoken. I know that members will repeatedly say otherwise, but I have not been able to finish more than three sentences at a time without a member interrupting with a point of order—in virtually every case, a point of order that was not even claiming to be about matters of order and that went on longer than I did in the previous exchange making substantive arguments. I'm happy to respond to the substantive arguments that were made under the guise of points of order, as well as to offer a motivation as to why I think this motion is important.

The urgency of this motion responds to the regular appeals we have heard from the Ukrainian government, the Ukrainian government's representatives abroad and diaspora organizations about the urgency of ensuring the integrity of the global sanctions regime. Russia's economy is heavily dependent on the development and export of natural resources, a key part of which is the export of gas to Europe. Energy-related sanctions are the means by which we can and hopefully will starve the Russian war machine of the capacity to continue to enact its genocidal war against Ukraine. That is why we have been urging the government and at times supporting the government in the steps it has taken in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine as it relates to sanctions but also expressing extreme disappointment as it relates to the—

• (1820)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Garnett Genuis:—decision of the government to grant a waiver—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I'm not actually sure if this is technically a point of order, but I would remind the member that he and his Conservative colleagues are the only ones who voted to lift sanctions against Russia. It was a Conservative motion in the House, an opposition day motion, that called on the government to lift sanctions on Russian fertilizer.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bendayan.

We go back to Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, the case the member refers to is a case in which the government made a decision to impose a tariff on farmers for products that had already been purchased. Farmers made decisions to make purchases from Russia prior to February of this year and then they were, after the fact, charged a tariff on goods they had already purchased. That tariff was not paid by Russia. It was paid by Canadian farmers. This is transparently a case of the government punishing farmers in a way that had no effect on the war effort whatsoever. If the government were able in some way to impose—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, may I respond?

Mr. Garnett Genuis:—those spending requirements on the Russian government—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, that is entirely incorrect. The Conservative opposition day motion made no mention of any—

The Chair: Ms. Bendayan, that's debate. We're going to have to go back—

Hon. Robert Oliphant: On a point of order, I believe that Mr. Genuis was debating, in the point of order, about not responding to the point of order, so I think on that side there's a matter of debate going on that could be ruled out of order as well. He's engaging in substantive conversation as opposed to really addressing.... He has every right to say something is not a point of order, which is a point of order, I would say. However, I'm making a point of order because he does not have the right to engage in a debate on substantive issues when something is raised as a point of order, even if it's ruled by you, Chair, not to be a point of order, and you have every right to rule that it is not a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: If I could respond to the point of order, then, I was not responding to Ms. Bendayan's point of order. I was resuming my substantive commentary because I had the floor. It's quite legitimate for me to make substantive arguments about substantive issues when I have the floor, even if I am responding to points that were not points of order that were made as points of order. I agree that Ms. Bendayan's point of order was not a point of order. Insofar as I had the floor on a substantive matter, I was within my rights to make arguments on substantive matters.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, you're moving into debate.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I believe he began his intervention by asking if he could respond to Ms. Bendayan's point of order.

The Chair: Yes, that's pretty telling in and of itself.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: That's exactly what you responded. You didn't respond saying that it's not a point of order. You actually acknowledged it was a point of order, and then responded to it.

The Chair: That's correct, Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I understand that I am now speaking not to any point of order, but I am speaking to the substantive motion. Thank you.

In the context of the substantive motion, Conservatives have never called for exemptions to sanctions that are paid for or are inflicting costs on the Russian government—

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Relevance, Mr. Chair...?

He's now responding to something that has nothing to do with the motion he has made. He's made a motion that doesn't mention any previous Conservative opposition days where they were attempting to get around waivers and all of those things about sanctions, so either he speaks to his motion relevantly or he lets us come to a vote on it. I'd be very happy to come to a vote on it.

The Chair: I would just ask that you keep your remarks relevant to the motion.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Absolutely, Mr. Chair. I was responding in debate to a point that was made in debate and not found to be irrelevant, so although it wasn't a point of order, I think the point was relevant to debate, which is the question of the broader sanctions regime and the integrity of the sanctions regime.

Ms. Bendayan is right to attempt to make arguments about whether or not others are advocating consistently for the integrity of the sanctions regime. It just happens to be that we are, and that is why, in this case as well, as we have from the beginning, we are calling for the revocation of the special permit that allowed the export of Gazprom turbines to Russia.

The particulars of the motion are to add the additional—

• (1825)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, is it allowed for a member to mislead the committee? I would like to read into the record then the Conservative opposition day motion that I was referring to. Is that procedurally allowed?

The Chair: It is a matter of privilege. Could you read what you found is misleading?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's not a matter of privilege. It's also not a matter of order. It's a matter of debate.

The Chair: Mr. Genuis, please proceed.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

As I was saying, our position has consistently been, from the beginning, that the permit should be revoked, but our motion adds additional information to the factual matrix demonstrating why it is

important in particular now, number one, given the fact that Nord Stream 1 is clearly no longer supplying gas to Europe anyway due to the blast that created the hole in the pipeline. This is somehow being used by the government to imply that it's no longer an important issue because the pipeline isn't supplying gas anyway. However, as long as the exemption exists, it sets a very negative precedent.

The number one thing I heard in conversations from people in Ukraine about the government's decision to put in place the permit was about the message that it sent, the precedent that it set, because allies have different interests when it comes to sanctions and there is always some cost when it comes to imposing sanctions. We don't impose sanctions ignoring that there's a cost. Generally speaking, we do so recognizing that the cost is worth it in pursuit of a greater good than simply economic well-being. When we have cases of nations that are allowing these kinds of permits to be granted, it sets a precedent whereby other nations will do the same thing.

This is what we heard from witnesses: When you start to weaken or fold on aspects of the integrity of that system, when you say, let's grant an exception here and let's grant an exception here, then other countries will start to make the same arguments and say, if Canada is granting this exception so that they can benefit from turbines that are, in fact, being worked on fairly close to the Minister of Foreign Affairs' own riding, then maybe other countries feel that they have the same licence to make the same kinds of decisions. This can then open a floodgate to the weakening of sanctions.

This is why revocation of this permit is extremely important.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

I think it is totally unbecoming of a member of the House of Commons to cast aspersions on a decision made by another member of the House of Commons with respect to being motivated by a position of where a factory might be, which is not in the minister's riding. It could be near it; I don't know.

However, I think it is actually a very serious matter to be suggesting that there's a conflict of interest. We have a Conflict of Interest Commissioner. If the member would like to raise this as a matter to go to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, he may do so, but it is inappropriate for us to even entertain that conversation in a parliamentary committee, and it is unbecoming of the member.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oliphant.

We go back to Mr. Genuis.

• (1830)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

I did not, in fact, cast the aspersions that he suggested I cast, but I would hope he would be as rigorous in the future about some of the outrageous accusations that have been—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I just noticed that it's 6:30, which is the end of our meeting.

I'm wondering how long we will allow this member to hijack the work of the committee and I would obviously, if you so choose, ask that we suspend the meeting in order to return to women's reproductive and health rights at our next meeting.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bendayan.

It is 6:30, and we were advised at the very start of this meeting that we had two hours for service, but before I suspend, allow me to thank the two witnesses. I wish I could say that I speak on behalf of all members of this committee in apologizing to you for having taken up your time and for not allowing you to—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You scheduled them without the consent of the committee, Mr. Chair. You scheduled them without the consent of the committee.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: There was consent of the committee. There was abstention by one member.

The Chair: —make yourselves available to the members.

[The meeting was suspended at 6:31 p.m., Wednesday, December 7, 2022]

[The meeting resumed at 2:10 p.m., Wednesday, January 18, 2023]

The Chair: We'll now resume meeting number 43 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Several members, as you can see, are present in the room, and others are joining us remotely using the Zoom application.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of all members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before you speak. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. Interpretation for those on Zoom is at the bottom of your screen, and you have a choice of either floor, English or French audio.

For those in the room, you can use your earpiece and select the desired channel. I remind everyone that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

As you will all recall, the committee suspended its meeting on Wednesday, December 7, 2022, while debate on a motion was ongoing. Therefore, we are resuming this meeting and the following motion is still on the floor.

The motion read:

That the committee report to the House that because Nord Stream 1 is no longer supplying gas to Europe due to a blast that created a 50-metre hole in the pipeline, because the granting of a waiver for the export of Gazprom turbines sends the wrong message to Russia about Western support for sanctions, and because the Government of Ukraine and Canadians have requested the waiver be revoked, the committee calls on the Government of Canada to revoke the waiver to Russian sanctions granted for the export of Gazprom turbines by January 5, 2023.

Moreover, as you are all aware, I reconvened the meeting today because six members of our committee put forth a request to dis-

cuss the committee's undertaking of a study of the current situation in the Lachin corridor of Nagorno-Karabakh.

While the committee has a few options with respect to how to proceed, please note that a committee may consider only one motion at a time. As I just mentioned, the committee is currently seized with the motion I just read, therefore we need to make a decision on the motion before moving on to other business.

Therefore, I'd like to hear—briefly, if possible—from the members on these points I just raised.

Please note that if no consensus is reached, I will let the members resume debate on the motion that I just mentioned earlier, since the chair cannot bring debate to an end while there are members present who still wish to participate.

Yes, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As members are aware, we did significant work on the Gazprom issue throughout the fall. I'm very pleased to see, following that work and what was an important contribution by this committee as well as the express view of a majority of it over time, that the government made a decision to revoke the sanctions waiver.

I had the floor speaking at that time. If I still have the floor, I would propose the following dilatory motion:

That the committee proceed to the discussion of the matter raised by the letter sent last week pursuant to Standing Order 106(4).

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

We will now proceed to that discussion pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), as requested by the six members.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, that's a dilatory motion.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent?

I hear no opposition to that, so it's unanimous.

(Motion agreed to)

We will now, thanks to Mr. Genuis, move to a discussion on the matter pursuant to Standing Order 106(4) that was submitted by six members.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Ariane Gagné-Frégeau): Mr. Chair, Mr. Bergeron has his hand up.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Bergeron, go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Chair, I would like to submit the following motion to committee members. We can discuss it and it can be amended as members wish. I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertakes to hold a maximum of three meetings to study the present situation of the blockade of the Lachin corridor, de facto isolating the Nagorno-Karabakh region; that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, the Ambassador of Armenia, the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Azerbaijan, representatives of the two communities in Canada, the permanent representative of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic to the United States and Canada, and Gegham Stepanyan, the Nagorno-Karabakh human rights defender, be invited to testify by Friday, February 3, 2023; that the testimony and materials gathered by the committee at these meetings be taken into consideration in the study of the security of the Azerbaijan-Armenia borders.

[English]

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

We now go to Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I'm generally supportive of this, but my concern is that members called for a special meeting today, when we had already agreed to have two meetings on the subject of the Nagorno-Karabakh situation. Today we are spending some time doing that.

It would seem to me that this is an unusual request that came in from six members. I'm always happy to have them explain that. We had agreed that we would have a meeting and that our first meeting back after January 31 would be on this issue.

We had agreed to do two meetings on the general situation. I would like to move an amendment—because we have a lot of pressing work on our agenda, which we've already agreed to undertake as a committee—that we add one extra meeting to the original two meetings. We would have a total of three meetings, recognizing that we have already had one meeting.

I would prefer to use the words “the Lachin road” because the word “corridor” does not have any legal standing. I find that the motion is already laden with the idea that we know what is happening there. I'll let that go and simply move an amendment that instead of a total of three meetings, we add one meeting to our existing study of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, with a focus on the Lachin road.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oliphant.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak to this amendment?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, is that being distributed? I don't know if I understood it. If others did, that's great.

The Chair: Yes. I will just explain to Mr. Genuis that we heard from Mr. Bergeron. Mr. Oliphant simply reminded all the members that we had previously agreed that our first session upon our return would be devoted to Armenia-Azerbaijan. We will be hearing from the Armenian ambassador and the Azerbaijani chargé d'affaires.

Mr. Oliphant's amendment is that we proceed with what we had previously agreed to and perhaps add one session devoted to the Lachin road. Mr. Oliphant is saying that he thinks it should be referred to not as “the corridor” but as “the road”.

Mr. Bergeron.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You seem to me to be awfully well informed about the details of Mr. Oliphant's proposed amendment. Like Mr. Genuis, I was not

sure I understood the meaning of the amendment. Following your clarification...

[English]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I take great umbrage with respect to that. I have not discussed this amendment with anyone, including the chair. An assumption of that implies something that is somehow nefarious. I would like that withdrawn, please.

The Chair: We revert to Mr. Bergeron.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Oliphant seems to be particularly prickly after the holidays. Perhaps he would need further appointments to correct this. I had no malicious intent.

Be that as it may, I'll get back to the point I wanted to make.

The problem with Mr. Oliphant's proposal is that we are facing an emergency that translates into a humanitarian situation on the ground, one that is deteriorating by the hour. I do not think we can wait until the House returns to consider this issue. Six committee members expressed the wish that we deal with this matter expeditiously and avoid interfering too much with our regular work, which is to resume when the House sits again. I thought that would find favour with our Liberal colleagues.

Personally, I do not wish to delay any other study, whether it be the one that was already planned on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict or the one on women's reproductive health.

To this end, we wish to meet more quickly, on the one hand, because the emergency requires it, and on the other hand, precisely to avoid encroaching on the regular work of the committee, so as to ensure that we can quickly resume the work planned by committee members.

I thought this proposal would appeal to our Liberal colleagues, but I have to say I am a little surprised at what I am hearing this afternoon.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

We will now go to Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to take just a moment to wish everyone on the committee a happy new year. We haven't seen each other in person yet, but happy new year to all of you.

From my perspective, I'm looking forward to this spring session being much more productive than the foreign affairs committee was prior to that. My thinking with regard to this particular study is that it is urgent. It is perhaps an opportunity for this committee to restart.

We were not able to complete our work in the previous session because of filibustering, disagreements and bickering within the committee, and I would like to stop that behaviour. I don't think that does any good for this committee. It doesn't do any good considering the amount of work we need to do as the foreign affairs committee.

I look forward to adding this meeting so that we can discuss this, put this important issue in front of this committee and get this work done, perhaps to restart this committee to some degree, and so we can continue with the other important pieces we have not completed, including the report on Pakistan and the report on Ukraine.

Frankly, we also need to have a working committee because of what is happening in the world right now. We still have a devastating, illegal war happening in Ukraine. We still have conflicts happening around the world. In fact, I am going to read a motion very quickly into the record, because I think that as a foreign affairs committee we also need to be looking at what is happening in Iran.

I will read it in, but before I do that, I will say that I support this work and I support moving forward as urgently as we can. I would hope that all committee members will treat this as a bit of a reset for this committee, so that we can do the job Canadians have sent us to Ottawa to do.

Very quickly, I will read this motion into the record:

That the committee hold three meetings to study the current situation in Iran, including examining

- (i) the federal government's refusal for listing the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, IRGC, as a terrorist entity,
- (ii) the connections between people or assets in Canada and the IRGC, and
- (iii) paths forward to support Iranian human rights activists, artists, journalists and other political refugees;

that the committee invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs to testify, as well as additional witnesses submitted by members of the committee; that the committee report its findings back to the House and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government table a comprehensive responsive to the report.

I will send this out to everyone in both official languages, but I wanted to make sure it was read into the record. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. McPherson.

I would like to add in response to your remarks that we had also agreed that before the parliamentary calendar resumes we would have a subcommittee meeting. That is precisely because of some of the issues Ms. McPherson alluded to.

I will now go to Dr. Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you very much, Chair.

I would like to support Rob Oliphant's amendment.

Why is this an urgent issue? What will Canada do, and what will our hearings do, other than what France and the United States have done? They are both members of the Minsk agreements through OSCE. They have both intervened, and the EU has now moved forward to ensure that some things are going. Azerbaijan and Armenia are really wanting to work through this process right now.

I just don't see how in the next three weeks Canada is going to suddenly deal with this, when the people who actually have authority for dealing with it, which is the Minsk group—notably France

and the United States, as well as Russia, which has also met with the two groups.... If you recall, in September Russia stepped in and said it would participate in bringing about some kind of agreement.

I think things are moving forward in the only way they can. Our committee's meeting and discussing this isn't going to suddenly fast-forward change. I just think we can wait, as we said before, and listen to what the subcommittee says about where we go next when we start back up again.

That's all I have to say, actually. I agree with Rob's amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Fry.

We now go to Ms. Bendayan.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In response to Mr. Bergeron, I will say that I am very interested in the proposal that we meet next week, before the House begins sitting again. Given that we have already scheduled a first meeting on this subject on January 31, I have no problem with adding further meetings next week.

It is clear that the issue we are discussing at the moment, the Lachin corridor, is extremely important, and I fully agree that we need to look at this as soon as possible.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I will be brief. I just want to react to what Ms. Fry just told us.

I am not so naïve as to believe that the work of this committee will result in a rapid unblocking of the Lachin corridor, since the people occupying it clearly have no intention of withdrawing quickly.

At the international level, there is a principle called the responsibility to protect. This principle was introduced internationally by a Liberal Prime Minister, Mr. Paul Martin, and was supported by the entire international community, in 2005. I don't think we have the right to sit back and do nothing on the pretext that no matter what we do, it won't change the situation.

I recognize that simply making a statement is likely to be merely symbolic. It would be similar to what was done in the Tibet case: it was a symbolic statement, but it was very important nonetheless.

I believe, quite respectfully, that we need to address this issue and that we have a moral obligation to do so, because a humanitarian crisis is developing.

I am taking the liberty of speaking publicly about a private discussion I had by email with Mr. Oliphant.

We have a moral responsibility to allow members of the committee to have access to the most up-to-date and accurate information, regarding what is really going on. We must not simply accept information that is passed on by whoever wants to pass it on to us. Given the information that is being conveyed to the members of this committee and the responsibility we have in terms of the values that we stand for, we have an obligation to meet.

I reiterate that the objective is not to add meetings simply to delay the work of the committee. My colleagues know that I am not in that frame of mind at all: I do not want to delay the work of the committee. On the contrary, I want us to be able to start the session and keep to the program we have set ourselves as closely as possible. I welcome Ms. Bendayan's intervention to this effect. I think it is important that we meet next week. The urgency of the situation requires it, and we must respect our work agenda.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

I understand that the next person with their hand up is Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair. I have just a brief procedural point and then a substantive point as well.

Procedurally we had a motion on the floor, and then Mr. Oliphant made what he termed an amendment but what sounded more like a suggestion. He didn't say, "remove this word" or "remove this section". He described what he would like to do.

I'm a bit confused as to whether we're discussing the suggestion of Mr. Oliphant as it relates to the motion of Mr. Bergeron or if there's a specific amendment on the table. If there is, I wonder if that specific amendment could be defeated. If there's a specific amendment on the table, we'll need to vote up or down on that amendment and then on the motion.

With respect to the larger issue—and I want to thank Mr. Bergeron for putting this forward—I was pleased to join him and my Conservative colleagues, as well as Ms. McPherson, in signing that letter. I think the horrors of what we're seeing, the significant humanitarian challenges of people in Artsakh or Nagorno-Karabakh certainly have been moving for me to see and read about. We are seeing a blockade that is in clear violation of international law and that undermines efforts to pursue peace and security.

We want to hear from both sides in the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but in particular I would like to hear the voices of those who are directly affected, those who are in Artsakh who are experiencing this situation. I'm glad Mr. Bergeron included some of those names in his motion.

One other issue for the committee to think about as we turn our attention to this issue is the issue of Russian influence in the Transcaucasian region. Historically Russia has had a fair bit of influence there, but the failure of the ostensible peacekeeping force from Russia to do its job, to facilitate the development of peace is, I think, an important strategic development. It speaks, maybe, to the need for greater engagement by other countries, countries that have been historically less engaged in that region, to offer to play a greater role in promoting peace and stability. It's, of course, part of this larger story of what is happening with Russia and its effort to project influence.

First and foremost for me it's the humanitarian situation, but I think also there are a variety of different considerations that should really motivate the committee to want to look at that. I want to underline my support for Mr. Bergeron's motion and initiative here.

Also, Chair, if you could provide some clarity on the procedural point, that would be great.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

Before we go to Dr. Fry, I understand that Mr. Oliphant has his hand up as well.

I would be grateful, Mr. Oliphant, if you could clarify whether that was an amendment or simply a suggestion.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: It's probably both. It was not able to be a formal amendment, because I didn't have the text of Mr. Bergeron's motion. I have it now. It's hard to make an amendment to something when you don't have the text in front of you.

Right now the motion that has been presented calls for the committee to undertake to hold a maximum of three meetings to study the present situation of the blockade of the Lachin corridor. I would amend those words to say that the committee would undertake to hold one additional meeting to the already agreed-to two meetings with respect to Nagorno-Karabakh, with the third meeting focusing particularly on the Lachin road.

I will try to do that again, but I'm not writing this down. It's that the committee undertake to hold a meeting in addition to the two meetings already agreed to on Nagorno-Karabakh. It's that we hold an additional meeting, so it's for a total of three meetings, on the Lachin road. I'm sorry, but the clerk may have to help me with this.

What I'm trying to do is simply say that instead of three more meetings, which would make five meetings on Nagorno-Karabakh—which I think is too many, given Iran and the other topics we are concerned with talking about at these meetings—I think a total of three meetings, including one dedicated to the Lachin road, would be appropriate for this study.

I'm not getting into the timing of that. I'll leave that to the chair and the subcommittee. That has been raised as well.

The intent of my amendment is that instead of five meetings on the topic we would have three meetings on the topic, including one dedicated to the Lachin road issue. One meeting has already been held, just for information. We've had one meeting. We are already scheduled to have one meeting when we first come back. This adds a third meeting, which I think would be useful and important, but I don't want five meetings.

The Chair: Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Oliphant. I'm pretty sure that's now an amendment through and through.

Dr. Fry, we now go to you. The floor is yours.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you very much, Chair.

I'm sure Mr. Bergeron did not mean to misunderstand what I said. I at no time said this was unimportant. I personally met with members of Parliament from both sides in Poland about this issue just before. I continue to correspond with these members of Parliament on this issue because of the OSCE being very involved in part of the Minsk agreement. It is something I am involved in and it is something I am aware of on an ongoing basis.

All I was saying, and I think I was agreeing with Mr. Oliphant, was that we could do it with fewer meetings. The chair will obviously decide when we do it, but I thought we were going to start at the first meeting on January 31. I thought we would be able to move on to the other meeting that Mr. Oliphant was referring to.

I did not in any way suggest that it was not important. I was suggesting that meeting more, and meeting before January 31, wasn't going to resolve anything in such a hurry. I was continuing to say let the status quo stand, plus one new meeting dedicated to the Lachin road.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Fry.

Go ahead, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, it's important to make it clear that I never meant to imply that Ms. Fry was telling us that she didn't think this situation was important.

Next, with regard to Mr. Oliphant's amendment, I am sorry, but I will have to vote against it. The reason is quite simple: we are faced with a unique situation which is part of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, of course, but which leads us to look at the situation not from a geopolitical angle, but from a humanitarian angle.

I don't think we can wait for the resumption of parliamentary work, because every hour that passes has important humanitarian implications, on the one hand. On the other hand, I don't think we can simply put what is happening now in the Lachin corridor in the overall context of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Firstly, in one case, as I said, it is more about the geopolitical aspect, while in the other it is more about the humanitarian aspect. Secondly, technically or officially, at least, there is no intervention by either Armenia or Azerbaijan. This is a so-called spontaneous

demonstration by Azeris who have decided, all of a sudden, for seemingly environmental reasons, to block the Lachin corridor, and thus the free movement of goods and people. This means that Armenians from Quebec and Canada can no longer leave the corridor and return to our country and that basic goods cannot cross the Lachin corridor.

I see Mr. Oliphant nodding. If he has information that I don't have, I would like to have it. So we need to be properly informed of the situation that is going on at the moment. At the moment, we rely solely on the information that the media or interest groups want to give us. That is why it is important that we meet, not when the House returns, but as early as next week, and look at this particular aspect of the issue which essentially involves our values on a humanitarian basis.

We will have ample opportunity later to discuss the geopolitical aspect of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations. However, for now, what interests us is that there is a so-called group of protesters blocking a corridor connecting a landlocked territory and Armenia, all of which has humanitarian implications.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for that, Mr. Bergeron.

Go ahead, Dr. Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: I hate to belabour this, but I think the assumption that we're all getting this information only from the media is not true. I just spoke, and I don't know if my English is as flawed as my French, but what I said was that I'm in contact regularly with parliamentarians who are in the thick of this at the OSCE.

I met with the Armenian delegation and with the Azerbaijan delegation in November. I continue to speak with them on text and email to see whether and how the situation is moving. I'm not just getting my information from the media.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. McPherson, the floor is yours.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just one quick thing I want to throw into this mix is that I think it is important that we are respectful to our witnesses and ensure that we don't have witnesses from either side testifying at the same time at the same meeting. I think that would be completely inappropriate.

I just wanted to make sure. I'm sure you've already thought of that, Mr. Chair, but I wanted to make sure that was articulated.

The Chair: Absolutely, and I remember this issue being raised in December. We will ensure that we proceed in a fashion such that we will hear from proponents and opponents.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak to Mr. Oliphant's amendment?

Ms. Bendayan is next.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, perhaps just as a question of clarification, does either Mr. Bergeron's motion or Mr. Oliphant's amendment specify the exact date or timing of these meetings? I don't believe so, and this issue of when these meetings would be held is not actually before the committee at this time.

Is that right?

The Chair: Yes. I can only presume that Mr. Oliphant did not provide any specifics as to—

Go ahead, Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I did not, but the motion itself as presented by Mr. Bergeron says that this would happen by Friday, February 3. It is in the original motion. I didn't change that. I still think that would be possible to accomplish by February 3, meaning we'd have two meetings by February 3. If the amendment fails, then we'll have to find a way to have, I guess, four meetings by February 3.

The Chair: Thank you for that precise response, Mr. Oliphant.

We now go to Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I just want to clarify, for Mr. Oliphant's benefit, that the motion also states that “the committee undertakes to hold a maximum of three meetings to study the present situation of the blockade of the Lachin corridor”. If Mr. Oliphant adds to these three meetings the one that was already scheduled on the general situation between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, then, of course, we would have four.

With regard to the issue of the Lachin corridor, we would have only three. In fact, there might only be two, as we are talking about a maximum of three meetings.

[*English*]

The Chair: Would anyone else like to speak to this issue?

The Clerk: Mr. Chong has his hand up, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Chong, the floor is yours.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Just to clarify, if Monsieur Bergeron's motion passes unamended, we would have three meetings by the end of the first week that the House of Commons resumes sitting, at the end of this month. That presumably would mean we would have one meeting next week and then two meetings in our regularly scheduled slots during the first week that the House resumes sitting.

Is that, Mr. Chair, a safe assumption of how the planning would take place?

The Chair: As far as I understand, yes, that is an accurate read of it. However, technically speaking, when the invitation was sent out to the two witnesses for the first session we will have upon our

return, it wasn't specifically on the issue of the Lachin road. I query whether that poses any challenges insofar as the members are concerned.

Hon. Michael Chong: Okay, but as a second question of clarification on this motion in front of us right now, if the motion is adopted, do those three meetings subsume the second of the two meetings that we had previously agreed to, which is tentatively scheduled for January 31? In other words, would we have, simply, three more meetings on Armenia and Azerbaijan in total, period, or would we have the three meetings specified by Mr. Bergeron's motion by the end of February 3, and then another, a fourth meeting, which was previously scheduled for January 31? I'd like clarification on which of the two would be the case if Monsieur Bergeron's motion is adopted, unamended, by the committee.

The Chair: As far as I understand, Mr. Chong, I think your read of it is accurate, but just to clarify—

Hon. Michael Chong: I don't have a read on the situation. I'm asking you which of the two it is.

The Chair: I think they're reconcilable unless Mr. Bergeron or Mr. Oliphant has something different to say.

Hon. Michael Chong: In other words, what you're telling us right now is that if Monsieur Bergeron's motion is adopted unamended, we would have three more meetings on Armenia and Azerbaijan, no more than that, and that the tentatively scheduled meeting for January 31 would be part of those three meetings. Is that correct?

The Chair: Yes, subject, again, to the caveat that when those invitations were sent out to the Armenian ambassador and to the Azerbaijani chargé d'affaires, it was about Nagorno-Karabakh in general. It wasn't specifically about the issue of the Lachin road.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: We have a bit of a procedural problem, then, because the committee has passed a motion to do a two-meeting study on Armenia. We have done one of the meetings. This motion does not refer to that study whatsoever. This is a completely separate study on the same area.

As Mr. Bergeron has said, actually his intention is to do something different. The first meeting was geopolitical and diplomatic and about the conflict that had begun in 2020. There have been skirmishes. We know the issue of that. We also have, in that intervening time, détente between Azerbaijan and Armenia, where the Prime Minister of Armenia and the President of Azerbaijan are in discussion with each other. That has not happened before.

There is a geopolitical reality that this committee should be apprised of. The conflict that happened in 2020 has significantly changed. We have now an area of Nagorno-Karabakh that was taken by force—“reclaimed”, as they say in Azerbaijan; an area that was diplomatically settled, with agreement by Armenia; and an area that was being controlled by the Russian military for five years, until 2025, so we have that area of Nagorno-Karabakh that is a very important discussion to have, because there's the Minsk process, there's the EU process and there are the Russian forces that are present.

Mr. Bergeron's motion does not have anything to do with that. It has to do with a situation that has to do with a mine that is in the Russian-occupied area and a road that links Nagorno-Karabakh with the main part of Armenia and goes through an uncontested area of Azerbaijan. I agree that both are important, but just following up from Mr. Chong, I think he's clarifying it, importantly, because they're two separate studies. I don't think we can simply say...unless there's a motion from this committee to not do the study we agreed to do on geopolitics or to put it aside. What we're asked to do is to have three special meetings on a new study tangentially related to the other study but not the same.

That's my dilemma—that we'd end up with five meetings on the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh instead of two. I'm very agreeable to adding one. I would even agree to adding two. I don't want to be a jerk about this. I just don't think we need three meetings on the Lachin road situation.

If someone wants to entertain a discussion and we reach a consensus to do four meetings altogether, two on the geopolitical and two on the humanitarian issue, I can live with that. I just don't think, when we have so many other issues going on in the world, we should take all that time, five meetings, on this issue. Three meetings is my preference. If there's a consensus for four meetings, two on the geopolitical situation, I'm okay, but recognize that we'll have an overlap of the witnesses. We want to hear from the two diplomats, the chargé from Azerbaijan and the ambassador, who would be coming, probably, about both issues. For our good learning, we'd probably want to keep some separation of the two, even though they are intimately related to each other.

I don't know, Michael, whether that helps you or hurts you in trying to understand where we are. I think we have to rescind the other study or delay it.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I see that, all in all, we are not very far from an agreement. May I refer again to Mr. Oliphant and the very wording of the motion that I proposed: "That, pursuant to [...] the committee undertakes to hold a maximum of three meetings [...]".

If the ideal for our Conservative friends and I is three meetings, but the Liberals and Ms. McPherson feel that two is sufficient and acceptable, let us seek to find a compromise. The motion as it stands, without Mr. Oliphant's amendment, already allows for that.

My only concern, again, is to ensure that we do not encroach on the work that was already planned for the next parliamentary session. That is why I would like, if possible, to have two meetings next week, and also the one that was already scheduled for the next parliamentary session.

I think this compromise suits everyone, unless I have missed something.

[*English*]

The Chair: We now go to Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also think we're very close and should be able to come to a compromise here. Would it not make sense to...?

Mr. Bergeron's suggestion seems reasonable. If we had the two meetings for his study next week and then completed our study the following week, we could meet everybody's needs. It would be a productive use of time.

Would it work for everyone if we did that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Are we to understand that Mr. Oliphant is withdrawing his amendment?

[*English*]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Yes. If I had unanimous consent, I could withdraw the amendment, but I think we need an understanding of the way we are going to do this.

I know that when the clerk starts to schedule witnesses, it's not our lives.... We could do two meetings and then one the next week. We have it all perfectly planned in our heads, but when she talks to the witnesses, it's sometimes the reality that they're not available when we want them, or there's overlap, or we're trying to make sure we don't have conflicting diaspora groups in the room at the same time. It's all of those kinds of things. I understand that.

I just want to get it nailed down to exactly what we're asking the chair to schedule for meetings.

The Chair: Would the clerk like to speak to that?

The Clerk: Yes, please.

We have Mr. Bergeron up first and then Mr. Genuis.

The Chair: Okay, but with respect to the issue raised by Mr. Oliphant....

We will go to Mr. Bergeron first.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Genuis will obviously be able to give his own views on the matter in a few moments, but I think the concern of our Conservative friends was that they could not, in two meetings, receive all the witnesses included in the motion, given the problems that Mr. Oliphant referred to earlier about not receiving representatives of both communities at the same time.

However, I am asking a question which I think I am answering by the same token. I think that to ask the question is to answer it.

If we receive the ambassador of Armenia and the representative of Azerbaijan during the first week of the session, they will, of course, want to speak about the general geopolitical situation, but I imagine they will also want to speak about the problems related to the Lachin corridor.

So, in the unanimous agreement that could be reached, we could for now exclude the ambassador of Armenia and the representative of Azerbaijan, who would be heard during the first week of the session and who will certainly want to speak on the blockage of the Lachin corridor. We could try to arrange the next two meetings with the other witnesses who are proposed in the motion.

Does this compromise proposal find favour with all my colleagues? If so, perhaps we have a solution. Mr. Genuis is going to speak just now, I presume, so we will have a little more precise idea in a few seconds.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

We now go to Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Chair.

I would underline briefly that I think the flexibility members are looking for in whether there are two or three meetings, exactly when those meetings happen and how the clerk will schedule them...all of that is well captured in the original motion that Mr. Bergeron put forward. It entails a maximum of three meetings, but not necessarily three meetings. It includes the flexibility already. I would suggest that the committee simply pass the motion and let the clerk do her work from there.

Given that the committee is planning on hearing from the diplomatic representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan under the rubric of the pre-existing study, I think the compromise Mr. Bergeron has proposed is reasonable as well.

In any event, what the motion says is that we're going to do this quickly and we're going to get the hearings done before the end of the first sitting week, with however many within that framework it makes sense to have. The motion establishes that flexibility, so I'm in support of what Mr. Bergeron said.

I think we're probably ready.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

We now go to Ms. Bendayan.

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am glad to see that we are almost there. However, before we proceed to the vote on Mr. Bergeron's motion, I would like him to clarify what he said earlier today, which was that he did not want to disrupt the committee's agenda.

As our chair pointed out, the committee was conducting its study on women's reproductive rights when we received Mr. Bergeron's motion. I would like to make sure that, immediately following that study, we continue on that path.

Would it be possible for Mr. Bergeron to confirm that?

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, the only thing I can say is that Ms. Bendayan can count on my full co-operation so that we continue the work as originally planned.

That said, I obviously cannot speak for the other political parties. However, what I can say, without revealing any inside secrets, is

that we might like to say things to each other in camera. Perhaps the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure will allow us to say these things to each other behind closed doors so that we can break the impasse and get back to a pace of work that is commensurate with what Canadians and Quebeckers expect of us, and commensurate with our responsibility in foreign affairs.

I hope that the work of this committee will resume and that the paralysis of the work of this committee will end. I therefore hope that we can resume the timetable as we had established it.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

It does appear that we have the possibility of a compromise here.

I understand that Mr. Oliphant had a question for the clerk as to what some of the practical considerations would be insofar as inviting additional witnesses. There were several witnesses named in the motion itself, but we would require to hear from more people.

Also, if the clerk could say in terms of practical experience when we could possibly have the two sessions next week—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, my hand was back up to propose a subamendment to Mr. Oliphant's amendment—

The Chair: I'm sorry. Okay. I apologize.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: —just on the scheduling of witnesses, but I'm happy to hand the floor over to Mr. Oliphant if he would like to do that directly.

I think it would be important to make sure we schedule the witness deadline so that all members can submit their suggested witnesses, if there are any additional witnesses to be suggested to those already outlined by Mr. Bergeron for this particular motion, and also a deadline for the women's reproductive study, so that witnesses can be submitted as well by all parties for that study.

Given Mr. Bergeron's comment indicating that we would resume, in his view at least, from what I understand, the committee schedule immediately thereafter, I wonder, Mr. Chair, if you would like to comment on that.

The Chair: Would you like me to comment on it or Mr. Bergeron...?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: No, I mean you, Mr. Chair. In terms of today, as you indicated at the beginning of the meeting, we are continuing the meeting that was held in December on women's reproductive rights, and we would therefore have to pick that back up after this study. Is that your understanding, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: That is my understanding, but as you will recall, it was agreed previously, and I repeated it today, that we have to have a subcommittee meeting next week as well.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, on that point, you have mentioned the subcommittee twice now, but seeing as how—and I do not sit on the subcommittee, so perhaps that is why I seek clarification—we do not need the subcommittee to reconfirm that we are going back to the study that we are already engaged in, I am asking in this meeting, publicly, for you to confirm that we will go back to the study that we have not finished and indeed have not started in any substantive way.

The Chair: I certainly understand your concern. Allow me, for the purposes of your question, to go to the clerk so that she can tell us where things stand insofar as the rules and procedures are concerned.

Madam Clerk, could you answer the question of what becomes of that issue?

The Clerk: In order to resume witnesses who were appearing during meeting 43, which we are resuming right now.... The decision was made at the resumption of this meeting to go to the discussion pursuant to 106(4). That was the decision.

As of resuming, no decision has been made to resume the questioning of witnesses.

The Chair: Did that answer your question, Ms. Bendayan?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: No.

The Chair: I'm a bit lost as well.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: Ms. Bendayan, at the beginning of this meeting, a dilatory motion was passed to move on to the next item of business, which is the item for which this meeting was called under Standing Order 106(4).

The study that was in progress was therefore suspended, and the members of the committee must agree on when they will resume it to question the witnesses.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, you've heard my view, as well as the view of Mr. Bergeron. I understand it is your prerogative to make that decision. I am asking you to confirm to the committee what your decision is.

The Chair: I don't have a decision. I want to ensure that I'm going about this properly, but barring anything that prevents us from doing so, yes.

It appears to me that the first meeting after this issue of Armenia and Azerbaijan, or the Lachin road, will go back to reproductive health, so that we can resume that study, which the majority of members have already indicated is considerably past due.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant, did you...? Ms. Bendayan said you might make some changes to ensure that there was a compromise with the Lachin road study.

Am I correct in that assumption?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: It was a witness submission deadline.

The Chair: Do you wish to do so?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I think, effectively, my amendment is withdrawn if we have unanimous consent. I think we're back to the main motion.

Ms. Bendayan's comments relate to other issues. I'm not sure we could amend that motion, but I think we have to entertain a motion after this motion about witness deadlines, both for this study and then for women's reproductive health. That would probably be the easiest way to do that. We'll decide what we're going to do and then we'll ask for witness deadlines for both this study and the next study. We'll get that done.

The problem is that today is Wednesday, and next week has only five days in it. That's the way weeks work. If we're trying to get two meetings in next week, plus the subcommittee, that means you have to schedule three meetings for next week. I'm not going to get into that.

I guess I should confirm that I have unanimous consent to withdraw my amendment. The intent of the committee is not to have three meetings on this one, but to do two meetings next week and one or two the following week, depending on how you are going to get the scheduling done. I think that's what we've agreed to.

The Chair: Absolutely. We revert back to Mr. Bergeron's motion.

(Amendment withdrawn)

The Chair: Would there be unanimous consent from the members that we submit witnesses for next week's hearings by the end of business on Friday? Is there unanimous consent?

Go ahead, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, correct me if I'm wrong, but we probably need, as Mr. Oliphant said, to develop a list of witnesses for the women's reproductive health study in a fairly short timeframe.

With regard to the Lachin corridor, unless I am mistaken, the motion already contains a list of witnesses. Since we're only going to have two meetings, obviously, and we already had concerns about hearing all of these witnesses in just two meetings, can we agree to keep to the list of witnesses in the motion that we're discussing now?

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry. Just for clarification, how many witnesses were in your motion, Mr. Bergeron?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: There was the Ambassador of Armenia and the Chargé d'affaires of Azerbaijan, whom we will hear from later. In addition, there was the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the representatives of the two communities in Canada—we can assume that there will be two—the representative of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and Mr. Stepanyan. So that's already five witnesses to be heard in two sessions.

So if we draw up lists of witnesses, we will simply multiply the number of witnesses without having time to receive them. So I suggest that we stick to the witnesses we have in front of us now, but set a deadline for submitting our list of witnesses for the women's reproductive health study.

[*English*]

The Chair: Fair enough.

Insofar as the witnesses identified in Mr. Bergeron's motion are concerned, do we have unanimous consent that those would be the only witnesses for the purposes of the Lachin road study?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask Mr. Bergeron to clarify something.

Shouldn't the community representatives be named?

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: In the case of the Armenian community, it stands to reason that it will be the Congress of Canadian Armenians. I believe the Azeri community also has an organization. Mr. Sorbara will certainly be able to tell us which one it is, since the president of that organization lives in his riding.

I think we can agree that these two organizations represent the two communities, unless some have other organizations in mind; but I don't really see what other organizations could be invited, besides these two, to represent these two Canadian communities.

[*English*]

The Chair: Additionally, Mr. Bergeron, you referenced the representative from Nagorno-Karabakh. Am I correct?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Yes, absolutely. I was just responding to Ms. Bendayan's question about who would represent the two communities in Canada.

There is the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the representatives of the two communities in Canada, which are the ones we just discussed, the representative of Nagorno-Karabakh in the United States and Canada, and Mr. Stepanyan, the human rights defender in Nagorno-Karabakh.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

Yes, Dr. Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: I just wanted to say this. There are a couple of other organizations that I could forward. We don't have to discuss them here. We can just forward them to you or the clerk if we have another list of witnesses. I have some other people who would be worth listening to.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have a question for Mr. Bergeron. He's wanting three meetings, but he's given us only this limited number of witnesses. How is he seeing the meetings functioning with this small number of witnesses?

The Clerk: Mr. Bergeron has his hand up.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I don't know how to answer Mr. Hoback's question precisely. I don't usually organize committee meetings. I am just desperately trying to find common ground between us. We don't want to have more than two meetings, so we don't want to have an endless list of witnesses. That is the common ground. If we accept Dr. Fry's proposal and submit witness lists, I very respectfully believe that two meetings will not be enough.

So either our Liberal friends agree that we should limit the witness list, in which case we could limit ourselves to two meetings, or we expand the witness list without limiting ourselves to two meetings.

I'm desperately trying to square the circle, but give me a hand, cripes!

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

Going forward....

Yes, Mr. Aboultaif.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a technical question. Do we have all the translation services available for these meetings if they are to take place next week, specifically for the one next week? I'd like that to be confirmed by either the clerk or maybe someone else.

Thank you.

The Chair: Yes, the clerk can respond to that.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The process to find out about services is that I would need the time and day that you would like to meet for the actual three meetings, and I would ask the services if they have the capacity. I would know within a maximum of 24 hours.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thanks for the clarification.

Now, I have one more thing. How are we going to move forward here, Mr. Chair? We have some submissions or some amendments to a motion that were withdrawn, and there were some other topics. I don't think I stand clear on where we are right now, based on from the beginning, when Mr. Bergeron suggested something with his motion, to where we are now with all the different discussions and topics. I'll be honest with you: I'm just lost here in where we're going and where we stand.

The Chair: I have to concede that I'm somewhat lost as well, because when I hear about the number of witnesses, I don't think that's a sufficient number of witnesses for the two sessions that would occur next week should this motion be adopted.

Am I correct in that, Madam Clerk?

The Clerk: One thing I can say is that the minister is one of the witnesses, and she appears alone, usually, so it would be one hour out of the four hours for the two meetings. Then it would all depend on how you want to divide your panel in light of the comment that was made earlier, which was to make sure that the two countries are appearing at different times. You can have one witness per panel. The number is up to you.

The Chair: Sure. It does seem that for four hours it would be a bit of a stretch to have the witnesses who are named. Would there be unanimous consent for every—

Mr. Randy Hoback: Sir, can I have the floor? Can you please—

The Chair: I'm sorry. I didn't realize you had your hand up. I thought you had forgotten to take down your hand.

I apologize, Mr. Hoback. Please go ahead.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I'm just getting back to Mr. Bergeron and the witness list. I agree with his witness list. I agree with his thought process that we don't want to water it down and end up getting only 10 or 15 minutes and not enough time to effectively question the witnesses. I don't necessarily mind what he's proposing in this situation, because it gives us more time to get in complete rounds and, for example, ask questions of the minister for an hour. We can get a complete round in with all the members for our questions and the answers from the minister.

Then, with the other witnesses, it gives us the chance to have a complete set of rounds where we all get a chance to ask questions. I can see where he's coming from, and I agree with him on that. It's up to you to figure out how to make it function, and I guess if the meeting ends early, it ends early. That's just the way it is.

The only other thing I wanted to mention, Mr. Chair, is that on next Thursday and Friday Conservative members won't be available. When you start looking at logistics for when you're going to hold this, it's going to have to be Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, because we have our own caucus meetings on Thursday and Friday of next week.

The Chair: Thank you for bringing that to our attention. We certainly wouldn't have known about that.

Dr. Fry, is your hand still up?

Hon. Hedy Fry: My hand is up again.

I wanted to suggest that traditionally... I'm not trying to insult Mr. Bergeron, but I think some of us have a list of other people who would be delighted to come and who actually may be on the ground and on the spot and could present to us. All I'm suggesting is that we do what is traditional. That is, everyone sends in their list of witnesses; people decide on who those witnesses are and the clerk tries to get them—if she can—to fill the spots. I don't believe we need to say that we're not going to give it its due. What we need to get is a diversity of voices, not just the voices that we currently have on the table right now.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Fry.

We next go to Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I'm supporting Dr. Fry. I think the committee puts itself in a very risky situation if our dominant witnesses are people who live in Canada and are not actually first-hand aware of what the situation is. I also think we put ourselves in a difficult position if we have two sets of opinions, as opposed to an expert who is neutral.

I think we need a number of witnesses who present a neutral position that is not shaded by the other topic, which is geopolitical. I think we can get opinions, but if we hear only opinions, then we're left in the situation of a he-said-she-said, which I don't think the committee should be doing. I think we need some real witnesses.

I can't speak to this—I haven't had a chance—but I will agree just in noting that our Liberal caucus is, I think, on Friday of next week, so we would not be able to do Thursday or Friday. On Thursday, I think we're available, but if you're not, we're not. We're down to Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and today is Wednesday. I do not know the minister's schedule—I'm never privy to that—but it is a break week from Parliament and often the Minister of Foreign Affairs is travelling. That's her job. I have no idea as to whether she would be available on those three limited days.

If we don't have a list that is a bit more robust, I think we could end up wasting our time. I really believe that we need to follow our standard procedures, as Dr. Fry said, where we don't just take witnesses coming from one source and where we have a number of witnesses and we make sure we have some expert, neutral, independent witnesses who can tell us what's actually happening on the ground, not what they read about on the Internet.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oliphant.

We'll now go to the clerk.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You have Ms. McPherson on the list, and then Mr. Aboultaif, Mr. Bergeron and Dr. Fry.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. McPherson.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Just very quickly and briefly, I'd like to point out that the NDP retreat is today, and nobody considered that while they were scheduling the meetings.

Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hoback: That's a good point.

The Chair: That's a good point, Ms. McPherson, but as you know, as I've indicated, I was not aware of it. I don't believe anyone was aware of it. Our apologies for that and also our thanks that you've taken time out of that.

Now we'll go to—

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I have a point of order. Just in defence of the chair on that, it's a Standing Order 106(4) discussion, and there were five days and six members, including Ms. McPherson, who signed the 106(4).

You had only five days and you had to give 48 hours' notice. I don't think you had the choice with respect to a caucus meeting that was happening that you didn't know about. I just think we need to defend the chair a bit on that.

Under the Standing Orders, we have a five-day limit. He had to do it and he had to give 48 hours' notice. It's kind of difficult. Also, the clerk had to get the right information, because we had a suspended meeting, which has never happened in living memory.

That's just to give a bit of credit to our chair, not that he needs someone helping him.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oliphant.

We'll now go to Mr. Aboultaif.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thanks again, Mr. Chair.

I'm still not clear on our witnesses. Can the clerk assist us—or at least assist me—in understanding what the timelines are to call further witnesses? How can we wrap this up quickly, in a way that... I mean, we're looking at sort of an urgent meeting next week on an irregular schedule, and we're struggling to find the ground here as to where we're moving on this. In addition, of course, now we see that Mr. Oliphant is still complaining about or at least supporting Dr. Fry on the witnesses and the call for more witnesses to make sure that the study is well worth the time and the urgency.

Again, from the clerk and from you, Mr. Chair, if you can explain this part to me, I think it will be very important.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Aboultaif, thank you very much for your question and your concern, but I have to say that it is up to the members—it's not up to the clerk—to determine how it's going to work with witnesses. That is a decision that all of the members present today have to make, but there has been some toing and froing.

Mr. Bergeron has indicated that he would like us to go only with the witnesses who were identified in the motion, whereas others are saying, “we don't feel comfortable with that”, because there might be a paucity, especially given the fact that one of those witnesses was our Minister of Foreign Affairs. It really is up to the members to make that determination, and I have every confidence that we can get there.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: If I may, what is the road map in this specific case now? Again, we're still in a muddy situation here.

What's the road map?

The Chair: We're in a muddy situation because there is disagreement between the members. Ultimately, we should listen to both sides. Now we can all decide which one of those considerations is more valid, and whether we should go only with the witnesses who were identified in the motion or, alternatively, set a date to submit more witnesses.

That's the decision before us.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: I'd like one more clarification. If the original motion by Mr. Bergeron was voted on and already passed, that means we agreed to his witness list and there's no room for other parties or such to be doing so.

I know Mr. Oliphant is shaking his head on this, but I want that clarification, please.

Thank you.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. Hoback, is your hand up?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Yes, it is.

What Ziad is saying is very true. If we've already passed the motion, why are we having this debate? If it's an amendment that they want to make to the motion, what they have to go through is proposing an amendment to go from the suggested witnesses to something other than that.

I would ask Mr. Bergeron to guide us, though, with regard to the witnesses he has picked out. What does he think is the appropriate amount of time we should have them in front of the committee, so that they don't get shortchanged if we end up adding more witnesses to the list?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I believe my name is next on the speakers' list.

I was just about to intervene to point out that I was to be next, after Mr. Aboultaif, on the list of speakers. I wanted to make a point of order, which was not a point of order, as Mr. Oliphant did.

I would point out, by the way, that Mr. Oliphant did not need to come to the chair's rescue, since Ms. McPherson in no way blamed anyone. She merely pointed out an empirically verifiable fact: if it is possible to hold this meeting today during the pre-session caucus of one party, it is certainly possible to hold a meeting during the pre-session caucus of another party. It was just an observation on her part. No one was blaming the chair. I don't see why Mr. Oliphant needed to come to the defence of the chair when there was no attack.

That said, I want to make it clear that I personally am not adamant that my witness list be retained. I just want to make it clear to my colleagues that it will be difficult enough to hear all of the witnesses mentioned in the motion in two meetings. If the list of witnesses is extended, I regret to say that we will not be able to keep to just two meetings.

The Liberals seem to want to pursue two irreconcilable goals, to keep this study to two meetings at most and to expand the witness list. Now, I regret this, but it is not feasible. It is one of two things: either we stick to this witness list and have only two meetings, or we expand the witness list—I do not see a problem with that—and we will have to have three meetings, not just two.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

Let me also clarify for all of the members that Mr. Bergeron's motion has yet to be passed. I only say this to correct what Mr. Hoback said.

We now go to Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Hedy Fry: My hand is up.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Speaking on the motion, first of all, I don't see the list of suggested witnesses in the motion as exhaustive. I think it's inclusive, but not exhaustive, so there can be other witnesses added.

Mr. Bergeron has said that this is meant to be a study on a reported humanitarian crisis. I saw this motion only when others did, today, before this meeting. I would like to talk to the International Committee of the Red Cross, or the Red Crescent. I would like to talk to the UN. I would like to talk to authorities who have an understanding of what the humanitarian situation is, what the blockade is about and what its effects are. Is it a political issue that we are hearing about from people outside of Nagorno-Karabakh? Is it a humanitarian crisis?

I think there needs to be at least one witness who is from a humanitarian agency and who knows the humanitarian situation in the area as opposed to giving us a political understanding of what's going on. If we're really going to do this separately from the geopolitical, we should do it from a humanitarian crisis aid perspective. This means getting the usual group of witnesses to tell us what is going on, and that could be the World Food Programme.

I don't have an answer as to who they should be at this very second, because that's what we do. We do some research on this to find out who would be the best witnesses to help the committee understand the crisis that Mr. Bergeron has importantly brought to us. You bring the crisis to us, but now I think it's also respectful to make sure that everyone on the committee does their work so we can look at what witnesses should come.

With that point being made.... I think Mr. Hoback is correct that there is not an amendment on the floor. Mine was withdrawn, so I would simply add to this amendment that there be a deadline of Friday January 20 at noon for additional witnesses from all members of the committee.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, Mr. Oliphant said "add to this amendment". This isn't a subamendment. This is a new amendment.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I'm sorry. I meant add it to the motion.

We had agreement that my amendment was withdrawn. We have consensus—not voted on—that we were moving toward two meetings on this particular issue. We're going to try to get them done Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of next week.

The amendment is simply that additional witnesses be submitted to the clerk by Friday at noon. That gives us tomorrow to do it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oliphant.

Is there agreement with what has been proposed?

(Amendment agreed to)

Hon. Hedy Fry: My hand has been up, Chair, for quite a while. Maybe you can't see it very well, but it has been up for quite a while.

The Chair: Go ahead, Dr. Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you.

I'm not going to repeat what Rob said, because that's what I was going to say. I want to point out, just generically, that when we consider being in one place at a time to attend a meeting, those of us—i.e. Randy, Sarai and I—who come from British Columbia need to travel the day before we come to Ottawa. For almost the whole day, when you add the three-hour time difference and the five-hour plane ride, we're not available. You are automatically shutting us out of a meeting, even if we wish to come, because we can't do it virtually on the plane.

I wanted to point that out to remind you that there is a part of the country that is west of the Ontario border.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Fry.

We now go to Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Hear, hear, Dr. Fry. I have the same issue that she has, and add three hours of driving on top of it. It can be a challenge, but we'll do what we can to be there, for sure.

I want to hear the clerk read out how the motion would read with the amendment that's being proposed.

The Chair: Thank you. Good call, Mr. Hoback.

Can the clerk please read out the motion that's being amended?

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The motion, with the amendment, would read as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertakes to hold a maximum of three meetings to study the present situation of the blockade of the Lachin corridor, de facto isolating the Nagorno-Karabakh region; that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, the Ambassador of Armenia, the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of Azerbaijan, representatives of the two communities in Canada, the Permanent Representative of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic to the United States and Canada, and Gegham Stepanyan, the Nagorno-Karabakh Human Rights Defender, be invited to testify by Friday, February 3, 2023; that the testimony and materials gathered by the committee at these meetings be taken into consideration in the study of the security of the Azerbaijan-Armenia borders; and that the deadline to submit additional witnesses to the clerk be at noon this Friday, January 20.

The Chair: Is it the will of the members to accept that unanimously?

Yes, Mr. Oliphant?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I was just saying yes. I'm happy with this, but—

The Chair: Is everyone okay with that? It seems like everyone is okay with that.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: That's excellent. I should say that we look forward to—

Yes, Mr. Genuis?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt your flow. It was just to come afterwards.

My understanding is that now that we've adopted the motion—the amendment and the main motion—I just want to suggest, if there's the agreement of the committee, that we invite our analysts to prepare revisions to the draft report on Ukraine that respond to emergent events in the intervening time, and that it be distributed so that the committee can proceed on that forthwith at the appropriate time.

We can discuss the order another time, but I think it will take the analysts some time to look at that. If there's agreement, we might want to give the analysts the mandate from the committee to prepare and distribute that revised version.

The Chair: It sounds like a very good idea.

Is there any disagreement there?

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, Mr. Bergeron has his hand up.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bergeron.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I have no objection to what Mr. Genuis has just said. I wanted to speak to the motion that we just passed.

Correct me if I am wrong, but if I understand correctly, we adopted the amendment and the motion simultaneously. Is that correct?

[English]

The Chair: That's correct.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: All right.

Also, as I understand it, the objective is to have only two meetings, but the motion allows you, potentially, to add a third meeting to the schedule, depending on what witness list you finally decide on.

[English]

The Chair: It would be two meetings next week and then an additional one on the Tuesday following.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I would like to clarify that the meeting next Tuesday has nothing to do with this motion. It was already scheduled by the committee to discuss the global geopolitical situation.

Here is my question. The consensus we have reached is that we should try to have two meetings on the situation in the Lachin corridor, but there are members who want to invite other witnesses, and that is what we have adopted. Because time is limited, we may have to hold up to three meetings to hear all the witnesses you will be asked to invite. The motion, as passed, allows us to have a third meeting if necessary. We may not need it, but we don't know yet how many witnesses the parties will propose. Therefore, you have this buffer of a meeting that you can add to the schedule to complete the Lachin corridor study, depending on the list of witnesses that will be submitted to you this Friday.

Have I clearly understood what we have in front of us?

[English]

The Chair: You're correct, Mr. Bergeron, in terms of the witnesses being submitted by Friday at noon. I would ask that you leave it with me and the clerk. We will endeavour to make sure that we manage to do this in two days and two sessions.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: That is what I'm saying, Mr. Chair.

It will be up to you, the clerk and the analysts to arrange the two meetings. The consensus is that we should hold this study...

[English]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Analysts don't organize meetings.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: May I continue, please, madam?

The consensus we had reached was that we would stick to two meetings. However, if the list of witnesses becomes too large, the motion allows you to call a third meeting.

[English]

The Chair: No. That's not my read of it. The extent to which—

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: In that case, Mr. Chair, how do you interpret the motion? “That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertakes to hold a maximum of three meetings [...]”

The informal consensus we have reached is that we should stick to two meetings with the list of witnesses we have here. There are now members who want to add witnesses. I don't know how many there will be on Friday at noon. You may have a list of 15 witnesses. Are you going to manage to have two meetings with 15 witnesses? I don't think so.

What I'm saying is simply that the motion, as passed, gives the chair, the clerk, and the analysts the latitude to call a third meeting, if they see fit.

Do we understand each other well?

[English]

The Chair: That being said, even if it provides that leeway, I'm asking that you leave it with us. We will endeavour to do it in a fashion that meets with the approval of all the members.

As you recall, one of the comments we heard was the need, for example, to hear from organizations that are following the humanitarian situation on the ground. However, I can assure you that we will not take licence to invite every single witness who is submitted. We will try our utmost to keep it restricted to two sessions, if that's okay with everyone.

Yes...?

Mr. Randy Hoback: It's Mr. Hoback.

I interpreted it similarly to Mr. Bergeron. You have your priority witnesses who are named in the motion, so they definitely need to be invited to the meetings.

What I'm concerned about is that we stack the meetings with so many witnesses that we don't give them quality time, nor do we get quality time to ask questions. That's my concern. I think that's Mr. Bergeron's concern too. I don't want to speak on his behalf, but I assume that's where he's going.

That's where the third meeting might be needed. If we see all of a sudden that there are six or eight witnesses presented, there's no way you can jam them into the two meetings. If you did that, I would be very disappointed, because you'd lose the spirit of the original motion, which was to hear the people who were invited in the motion and still allow the committee members, if they have one or two more witnesses, to add more.

If the committee members still think they're vital to the study, they should be given another meeting to have their witnesses heard. If we need to find another time in the day to do that, it can be three meetings in a day during a break week. If you want to stack the meetings on the Tuesday, starting at 11 o'clock until one, from two to three, and from three to five, you have that prerogative if the clerk and the administration can do that. You have some flexibility, if you decide to go down that path.

I do not want to see a whole pile of witnesses in front of a committee when we can't properly ask questions and get in proper rounds of questions. The priority should be what was mentioned in the motion about those witnesses and making sure they come to the committee first, before you consider anyone else.

The Chair: Yes. I can assure you, Mr. Hoback, that all the witnesses who were identified in the motion will be invited. However, it could very well be, as was pointed out by the other members, that, for example, the minister is not available.

I think I speak on behalf of all members when I say we certainly appreciate the concern you've identified. None of us likes to do that to witnesses and stack it so that none of us have the opportunity to.... It puts them in a difficult position when we have too many people. We will endeavour to balance all those considerations.

In that vein, I would ask that the parties, as they are submitting their witnesses, not come up with a lengthy list. If each party provides one or two witnesses, that will allow us to make sure we hear from different perspectives. To Mr. Hoback's point, we don't want too many witnesses we will not have an opportunity to properly question.

Is that okay?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Of course, Chair, if you have eight more witnesses, you can see the problem, can't you? You say even if you—

The Chair: Mr. Hoback, this happens all the time. On numerous occasions a wide variety of witnesses will be submitted to committees. It doesn't mean every single one of those witnesses will be invited. It happens all the time.

We will endeavour to present witnesses who are from different perspectives and look at it from a humanitarian perspective. We will endeavour to do that. I would be grateful if you could just leave that with us. We will try to do the best we possibly can.

Again, let me emphasize that if each of the parties just sent in a couple of witnesses, that would allow us to ensure that we proceed in the fashion you have identified, Mr. Hoback.

Is that okay?

I would just remind everyone to please send....

Yes, Mr. Aboultaif.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Chair, I had my hand up.

The Chair: I did not see that. I apologize. Go ahead.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you.

It's been almost two hours, a melatonic two hours, with a lot of uncertainty. I would call it very muddy water we're dealing with here, or a muddy situation.

I'm not sure if you can clarify, first of all, whether or not it is considered the case that the motion of Mr. Bergeron has passed. If that is the case, then this is the beginning of a road map that we are going to move forward with. In view of that and all the caucus meetings next week and so forth, I would like to call for the adjournment of this meeting.

The Chair: For sure, Mr. Aboultaif, but let me just assure you that Mr. Bergeron's motion was adopted.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: In that case, I move that the meeting be adjourned, please.

The Chair: Okay.

We will proceed to a vote, Madam Clerk, on whether or not to adjourn the meeting.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 8; nays 3)

The Chair: Thank you, everyone. The meeting stands adjourned.

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