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Chair: Mr. Ken McDonald



Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.)): I now call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number two of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. The committee is meeting today to discuss committee business.

The meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending remotely using the Zoom application. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. So you are aware, the webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

The meeting is also taking place in the webinar format. Webinars are for public committee meetings and are available only to members, their staff and witnesses. Members enter immediately as active participants. All functionalities for active participants remain the same. Staff will be non-active participants and can therefore view the meeting only in gallery view. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants in this meeting that screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

First, members may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of floor, English or French. If interpretation is lost, please inform me immediately and we will ensure interpretation is properly restored before resuming the proceedings. The “raise hand” feature at the bottom of the screen can be used at any time if you wish to speak or to alert the chair.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as usual by the proceedings and verification officer. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, it is the intent that you keep your mike on mute. As a reminder, all comments by members should be addressed through the chair. With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

I have a few notes on how we will proceed today. I want to let everyone know that we have 14 or more motions before the committee. If we want to get through this in our two hours today, I will need to see co-operation among all of us. I will keep a list of those who wish to move their motions and a separate list of who wants to speak on the debate of that particular motion. Please do not interrupt another member who is speaking unless you have a point of order. If you raise your hand, I will get to you.

When making amendments, read slowly and clearly so interpreters and our committee staff can follow along. I will recognize each member who wishes to move a motion, one at a time. I will ask them to move their motion, and I will open the floor for debate or for amendments. Then, we will come to a decision on that motion. Once that motion is dealt with, I will move on to the next member who has a motion to move. If you have multiple motions to move, that's fine. I will get back to you again in the order of precedence, but you won't get to move all your motions at once. That way, it seems fair to everybody to get at least something done here today.

Before we start, does anyone have any questions or concerns about the procedure for today?

I see a hand up from Madame Desbiens.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Chair, I don't have any concerns, but there are a lot of captains on this ship, and I wanted to take the lead and cast off first.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, Ms. Desbiens. You may go ahead. We're ready now to move on with your motions. You had your hand up.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to seize the opportunity to welcome and thank the people from interpretation services, which are very important to me as a francophone.

This is my first notice of motion, on seafood labelling:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans undertake a study on the introduction of a food traceability program to curb seafood fraud and mislabelling and examine its potential impact on the economy, conservation efforts and food safety for Canadian consumers, fishers and producers; that the committee hold no less than four meetings; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

There, we've cast off.

[*English*]

The Chair: That is not a problem. Thank you for that.

I see a bunch of hands up. I don't know if that's for making motions or to actually speak to this motion by Madame Desbiens.

• (1110)

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Just for clarification, Mr. Chair, I want to speak to the motion by Madame Desbiens.

The Chair: Go ahead, Serge.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Madame Desbiens, I know that you presented a motion on the labelling of seafood products. A notice of motion was received yesterday. Is the motion you presented today that same as today's, or is it a bit different?

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: It's not quite the same. We've removed a few things. I think that we didn't have a 48-hour time limit, so we presented a new motion to the clerk with changes and withdrew a few things that were problematic.

Mr. Serge Cormier: That's perfect.

I just wanted to know if it was indeed the same motion. I see that some words are different. I obtained the answers I wanted. Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there any other questions or debate on the motion?

I'm not seeing any. I don't know if it's the intent of the committee.... I'm not seeing any objection, only a clarification from Mr. Cormier. Can I assume that we will see this motion pass unanimously?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We'll now go to Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Just as a quick clarification before I go to the motions, are the motions that we gave notice of at meeting number one assumed to have been tabled, and do we speak to them in the order in which they were tabled?

The Chair: It's not in the order in which they were tabled. For example, right now I'm recognizing you to go next, so you can introduce one of the motions you put forward, and then I'll go to the next one.

Just to let people know where we are with the hands up for motions, Mr. Perkins will go now, and then Mr. Hardie and Mr. Arnold. I ask that those guys be ready to go, and then Mr. Zimmer after that and then Mr. Small. You can lower those hands for now.

That way, when you put your hand up, it will be to speak to the particular motion that is being put at this time.

Mr. Perkins, go ahead whenever you're ready.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I move, "That the committee request that the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard appear before the committee for a two-hour meeting in the first week of February 2022 to speak to the issues related to her portfolio."

The Chair: We've heard the content of the motion.

Mr. Kelloway, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the member opposite for that motion.

I personally believe it's always important to have ministers and their officials appear before committee. I am certainly in favour of the minister appearing, and I know she would be as well, but I'd like to think, and I'd like to remind some folks, that perhaps what we could do is look at scoping this in a more definitive fashion.

I propose that we amend the motion to state that the minister would appear to speak to the mandate letter from the Prime Minister, which is significant, and to the supplementary estimates (C) for 2021-22. Given that this meeting is happening before the House returns, I would also like to leave room for the actual tabling of the supplementary estimates (C), in terms of timing.

I propose that we look at an amendment to this, which would reflect the framework under which.... It would speak to the mandate letter and also to the supplementary estimates (C).

The Chair: Could I ask for clarification, Mr. Kelloway? Could you read the motion as amended by your amendment?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Very good, Mr. Chair, I will: "That the committee invite the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard for one hour, and senior officials for two hours, to appear in consideration of the supplementary (C) estimates, and the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard's mandate letter at their earliest convenience."

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cormier, do you want to speak to the amendment?

• (1115)

Mr. Serge Cormier: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair; it's not for the amendment; it's just to be on the list for motions.

The Chair: Okay, we have that. You can lower your hand.

Is there any discussion?

Mr. Perkins, go ahead.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I can't support the amendment. One, it's limiting it to one hour, and two, it's too narrow a scope. I think we need to probe the minister on broader issues than just those in the mandate letter.

I guess I'll leave it at that. We need her for the full two hours.

The Chair: Mr. Kelloway, do you want to respond?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: With respect to the member opposite, I think that, in particular, the mandate letter provides a definitive scope and platform by which to get into some of the substantial issues in the fishery. I respect the member opposite's opinion, but I believe scope and framework for getting the most we can from the minister during that time frame would be important.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Arnold, go ahead.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have one question and then one comment.

Mr. Kelloway mentioned the (C) estimates. I'm questioning whether those have been actually tabled yet. We might be presumptuous in narrowing the scope to just the (C) estimates. Would it be possible to have this added to his amendment, that we'd have the minister appear on the estimates, the mandate letter and on matters related to her department?

The Chair: That would be a subamendment to the amendment.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Yes.

The Chair: Now we're speaking only to the subamendment.

Do you want to speak to that, Mr. Zimmer—not the amendment, but the subamendment?

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Yes, I was just going to speak to the amendment, but I would support what my colleague is trying to get across by having the minister speak for two hours. I'd say a broader definition is better. There's a lot to talk about in our particular ministry with respect to our responsibilities from coast to coast. I think it would be better with four hours, but two hours will do.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any more discussion on the subamendment?

(Subamendment agreed to on division [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Now we'll discuss the amendment itself, as amended.

Mr. Rick Perkins: On a point of clarification, is that a one- or two-hour appearance, in the amendment that we're dealing with now?

The Chair: The subamendment was that the minister appear for two hours, I believe. That was the subamendment by Mr. Arnold, as I understood it.

Mr. Mel Arnold: That's correct, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Hardie, go ahead.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I took it that Mr. Arnold's amendment was simply to add the wording regarding the scope of the testimony to be heard, on other matters concerning the department. The main amendment has to do with the amount of time the minister will spend.

The Chair: I thought that Mr. Arnold did ask for the two hours. I could be wrong.

I'm going to ask one of the clerks to clarify, if they are taking notes, or the analysts.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tina Miller): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For the subamendment by Mr. Arnold, I would actually need a copy of the subamendment. I believe the decision was carried on division; however, I did see some hands raised, just to note.

It's just to ensure that we have copies of the amendments. I don't have copies, as it stands now.

The Chair: Perhaps Mr. Arnold can provide that. If it's different from what I thought, then we'll... We can't get back to it until we know, because we have to go to the subamendment first, as amended.

Mr. Arnold, perhaps you could provide that to the clerk, please, or at least read it out.

• (1120)

Mr. Mel Arnold: In order to provide the subamendment, I would need the actual amendment from Mr. Kelloway.

The Chair: Mike, can you read out your amendment, please?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I sure can: "That the committee invite the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard for one hour, and senior officials for two hours, to appear in consideration of the supplementary (C) estimates, and the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard's mandate letter at their earliest convenience."

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kelloway.

Go ahead, Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I propose that it be amended to two hours, and then at the end of the amendment to discuss—

Mr. Rick Perkins: That's "in the first week of February 2022".

Mr. Mel Arnold: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] if I can speak to the reason for that.

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

Go ahead, Mr. Morrissey.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Thanks, Chair.

Could we go back for clarification? There's a bit of confusion, and I want to know clearly what we're voting on.

Typically, in all of the committees in the past, the minister has come in for an hour and the officials have come for the rest of the time. If we could see exactly.... The wording has changed twice now with Mr. Arnold's subamendment, and there's been another interpretation added by another member of the committee, so I am unsure what I am voting on and I'm requesting clarification.

Until we see it, until somebody can produce the actual wording of the subamendment and how it impacts the amendment, I do not know what I'm voting on as a member of the committee.

The Chair: Okay. I'll ask Mr. Arnold again to provide a copy to the clerk so that she can distribute it.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Again, Mr. Chair, in order for me to provide the subamendment, I would need to see a written copy of the amendment proposed by Mr. Kelloway.

The Chair: It has been sent to the clerk.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Yes, it has been sent to the clerk.

Mr. Rick Perkins: However, it has not been sent to the members. Is that correct?

The Chair: No, the clerk will do that.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Mr. Chair, what was recorded as passed on division? Could you explain that to the committee?

The Chair: It was the original subamendment by Mr. Arnold, but then there was some question as to what was actually in that subamendment. I didn't write it down. I listened to it, but I can't tell you word for word what Mr. Arnold read out as his subamendment. I can't tell you if it's identical to what he just read out now, but it did pass on division as it was provided.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Has that been dealt with? It was recorded as agreed to on division. That's the other clarification. I'm not sure how the clerk was referencing "on division", because there were members on the government side who voted in favour of Mr. Arnold's subamendment.

The Chair: The "on division" part was because I saw a number of thumbs-up and other people didn't have anything. That's why I said "on division".

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Okay.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Just for clarity, I did state that I would prefer four hours but two hours would suffice, and nobody corrected me on that, either. I understood that "two hours" was in the original motion by Mr. Perkins, and it was followed through by me and Mr. Arnold. I believe that was the intent of what was voted on. If the text needs to clarify that, then it does, but I think it was pretty clear that we wanted two hours.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Arnold, have you received the text of the original amendment?

Mr. Mel Arnold: It just came in, Mr. Chair, and I'm working on some edits so that I can send them back to the clerk.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. Bachrach.

• (1125)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Chair, while we're waiting for that, I wonder if I could just clarify what I think we're voting for if we vote for both the amendment and the subamendment.

In trying to follow the conversation so far, we're talking about having the minister and the officials appear in the first week of February for a two-hour meeting to discuss the mandate, plus the supplementary estimates (C), plus anything else related to her department. Is that the summation of everything that's been proposed?

The Chair: Yes, if we agree to the subamendment, the amendment and the actual amended motion, that's basically what we're trying to arrive at.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Okay. That's fabulous. I support all of that.

The Chair: Mr. Hardie, you have your hand up.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Yes, I do. I need a bit of clarification as well. When are the supplementary estimates (C) due to be available? I'm not sure they would actually be available to the minister by the first week of February.

The Chair: That would depend on when they get tabled in the House, I guess: whether they get tabled before we do the study on this particular motion or afterwards. If they're not tabled, they won't be up for discussion.

Mr. Ken Hardie: If they're not tabled at that point and they're tabled subsequently, would this mean that the minister would be required to come back to committee another time?

The Chair: Not unless the committee requests it....

Mr. Ken Hardie: I see. Okay.

The Chair: The subamendment didn't say two dates. It said "in the first week of February".

Mr. Ken Hardie: I can't support the first week of February. That's too soon. We may as well get it all done at once.

Mr. Mel Arnold: I have sent the subamendment back to the clerk, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

As soon as members receive the subamendment, please let me know. Just wave or something.

I see a thumbs-up from Madame Desbiens.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to let you know that I did indeed receive the sub-amendment.

[English]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Chair, can I ask for a recess of a couple of minutes so we can clarify all of that? We've already voted on the subamendment. Can I ask for a five-minute recess, please?

The Chair: Will a couple of minutes do, Mr. Cormier?

Mr. Serge Cormier: Yes, a couple of minutes will be fine.

The Chair: Okay. I'll agree to a recess for a couple of moments.

• (1125) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1130)

The Chair: We're back.

For clarification, because everybody seemed to be hung up on what exactly Mr. Arnold's subamendment to the motion was originally, I've done everything I could to try to find out. According to ParlVU, which is recording all of this and the text of what was said, this is exactly what Mr. Arnold said: "Mr. Kelloway mentioned the (C) estimates. I'm questioning whether those have been actually tabled yet. We might be presumptuous in narrowing the scope to just the (C) estimates. Would it be possible to have this added to his amendment, that we'd have the minister appear on the estimates, the mandate letter and on matters related to her department?"

That's what we voted on. If Mr. Arnold is proposing something else, it would be a new subamendment, but the first subamendment was voted on and passed on division, as I said.

Mr. Arnold, are you proposing a new subamendment?

Mr. Mel Arnold: The only thing I would add to it at this time—and there may be others who will propose further subamendments—is "and other matters relevant to her department" at the end of the motion.

The Chair: Okay. That's the text of a new subamendment: "and other matters relevant to her department".

Mr. Mel Arnold: That's correct.

• (1135)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I think what Mr. Arnold just said really covers what his original subamendment said. What I took to be the only substantive addition was "and matters related to her department".

If Mr. Arnold intended for the supplementary estimates (C) to be added, that certainly negates the opportunity to do this in the first week of February, because they probably won't be tabled, and there was nothing in Mr. Arnold's original subamendment that spoke about the length of time the minister would spend at committee. The only substantive addition was the matters related to her ministry.

The Chair: Yes. The subamendment would be.... I've read out what was passed on division. The new subamendment would be "and matters related to her department". That's the new subamendment.

Mr. Ken Hardie: We just passed that.

The Chair: Okay.

Are there any other subamendments before we go back to the amendment as amended? I think it was Mr. Kelloway who made the amendment originally, but now it has been amended. We'll go back to that.

Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I cannot support the amendment, friendly or otherwise, as it delays the minister's appearance to sometime after the estimates are tabled, and these are two separate issues. When the estimates are tabled, we can deal with the ministerial appearance then.

I believe we need to start the committee's work in this session with an appearance by the minister. That should be our first meeting and we shouldn't be delaying it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

All I will say to that as chair is that it will depend on the minister's availability to appear, and we don't know her availability right now.

Mr. Zimmer, you have your hand up.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I agree with my colleague Mr. Perkins. For clarity, I am against this amendment and support the original motion. Thank you.

The Chair: I don't see any more hands up for the amendment as put forward by Mr. Kelloway and amended by Mr. Arnold.

Before we vote, could I ask the clerk to read out the amendment proposed by Mr. Kelloway, with the amendment to the amendment?

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is the amendment by Mr. Kelloway as amended by the subamendment from Mr. Arnold: "That the committee invite the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard for two hours to appear in consideration of the supplementary (C) estimates and the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard's mandate letter at their earliest convenience, and other matter related to her department."

The Chair: I think we have all heard the text of the amendment.

Is there any discussion?

Mr. Bachrach, go ahead.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: On the matter of timing, it seems to me that the change has been from "the first week of February" to "at their earliest convenience." Is that correct?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Okay.

I would support more definitive wording around the timing. What Mr. Perkins said about having her appear closer to the beginning of the committee's work makes sense.

I'm not sure where that leaves us with the amendment. If it's voted down, we will also lose other content in the amendment that seemed to have broader agreement within the group.

The Chair: Mr. Hardie, go ahead.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Chair, in practical terms, we could ask for the first week of February, but if the minister is not available, it won't work.

I don't disagree with Mr. Bachrach or Mr. Perkins that sooner is better in terms of launching the work we're doing here, but to be that definitive in the motion just sets up something that may well not work at all. I think "at their earliest convenience", as in Mr. Kelloway's amendment, is probably the most appropriate.

The Chair: Mr. Kelloway, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Mr. Chair, for the sake of clarity—and I think that's the optimal word today—I wonder if the clerk could read the amended version again. I was paying attention, but I just need to hear it one more time.

Also, with respect to "the earliest convenience", ideally this is going to be very soon. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the minister is eager to sit with the committee to listen to observations, questions and things of that nature. Ideally, it would have been great to have that addressed in my original amendment, but I would say, further to Mr. Hardie's point, that I think the words "earliest convenience" say that, and the minister is committed to getting here as quickly as she can.

I think putting a timeline of February, which is literally in maybe 11 or 12 days, is folly, but I will defer to the wishes of the committee.

• (1140)

The Chair: Mr. Perkins, go ahead.

Mr. Rick Perkins: The challenge with Mr. Kelloway's amendment isn't with "the earliest convenience"; the challenge is with supplementary estimates (C) being tabled. That is some ethereal time, but we're not [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] another study. Unless the government members can share some insight, I don't know when those estimates will be tabled.

I have a problem with regard to the timing mentioned in the amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

The clerk is waving to me now, so I will give her the floor.

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Could we suspend for just a moment so I could speak with you, please?

The Chair: That's no problem.

The Clerk: Thank you.

The Chair: We're suspended.

• (1140)

(Pause)

• (1145)

The Chair: We're back after a very short conversation with the clerk, who wanted to identify some things for me.

I'm going to ask the clerk to clarify the text of the amendment and the subamendment.

Go ahead, Tina.

The Clerk: I'm trying to find the wording from ParlVU, as I don't have it here.

One moment, please. Thank you. I apologize for that.

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead.

The Clerk: The amendment as amended by Mr. Arnold reads as follows: "That the committee invite the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard for one hour, and senior officials for two hours, to appear in consideration of the supplementary (C) estimates and the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard's mandate letter, and other matters related to her department, at their earliest convenience." This is what is on record.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Tina.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Chair, I believe there is an error in what the clerk read out. I had removed the reference to "one hour".

The Chair: That's not what ParlVU has recorded.

Anyway, there are other hands up ahead of yours, Mr. Arnold. I'll get back to you.

Go ahead, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Given that we're well into this meeting and we're on the second motion of 14, I wonder whether there might be some way to short-circuit this by talking broadly about the principles that we're trying to achieve here. I think there are very minor areas of disagreement around the definition of the timeline in particular. What we've heard is a desire to have the timeline at "the earliest convenience" and a desire to have it definitively in the first week of February.

Could we strike some sort of compromise and have the timeline set for the end of February? That would both give the minister a bit more time and give more time for the supplementary estimates (C) to be tabled. It wouldn't rush things and put any undue constraints on the minister's schedule.

I'll look to you, Mr. Chair, on this. If we could achieve agreement on the timing, then we would have the whole thing and we could somehow clear the decks to put forward a clearly worded amendment and get this done.

The Chair: I tend to agree with you, Mr. Bachrach, but in order to change it today, you'd have to make a subamendment to the amendment that's now deemed to be the one that was accepted. If that's what you're saying, we can put that forward as a subamendment and vote on it, and if it's there, it's there. If it gets voted down, it gets voted down. That would be a decision of the members of the committee, not mine.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, I don't want to jump ahead, because I believe there is one other matter that was unresolved. That was around one hour versus two hours. If it does please the committee, I would be happy to put forward an additional subamendment changing the timing from "earliest convenience" to "before the end of February".

The Chair: Has everybody heard the text of the subamendment?

I see a few hands up. Do people want to speak to the subamendment by Mr. Bachrach?

I see Madame Desbiens.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Chair, I'd like to bring to your attention the fact that we don't know when the Supplementary Estimates (C) will be tabled. This factor could influence our decision, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Go ahead, Mr. Kelloway.

• (1150)

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Very quickly, I appreciate the intervention by MP Bachrach in terms of the timeline of the end of February. I think it addresses one of the main obstacles here.

I appreciate the intervention. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

I have Mr. Cormier.

Mr. Serge Cormier: I'm sorry. It was the same thing. I agree with Mr. Bachrach.

The Chair: Okay.

Not seeing any other discussion, can I take it that we accept this subamendment as proposed by Mr. Bachrach?

We might need a recorded division, because I see thumbs-up and thumbs-down indications.

Tina, could you do a recorded division, please?

The Clerk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is on the subamendment from Mr. Bachrach.

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The subamendment is carried. Now we go back to the motion as amended.

Is there any discussion?

Go ahead, Mr. Cormier.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Can we read that again, please? I'm sorry, but it's something that's hard for me to follow in English. I think it's the same for Caroline.

The Chair: Okay. I can read it all in English for you, if you want.

It reads, "That the committee invite the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard for one hour, and senior officials for two hours, to appear in consideration of the supplementary estimates (C) and the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard's mandate letter and other matters related to her department by the end of February."

Is there any discussion?

Serge, you still have your hand up, but I think that was for the last one.

Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: This is just for clarification, perhaps. There seem to be contradictory elements. If the supplementary estimates (C) are not tabled before the end of February, what happens?

The Chair: Well, to me, the minister would appear without their being tabled, if that's the case. As somebody said earlier in the meeting, we can't control when the supplementary estimates (C) will be tabled, but if it's in the motion when the minister comes, at least we can discuss them and all other relevant matters. We're not necessarily tied down to supplementary estimates (C) such that she won't appear if they are not in place. I'm in favour, like everyone else, of the minister appearing as soon as possible, but if the supplementary estimates (C) are not part of that, it won't be a part of it.

Mr. Rick Perkins: The supplementary estimates (C) can be asked about under all the other wording that's in the motion without it actually being in the motion.

The Chair: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Rick Perkins: The problem is that since it's in the motion, it's a contradictory element and can be used to prevent her from appearing.

The Chair: I don't see it that way, Mr. Perkins. It says "other" related matters. If the supplementary estimates (C) haven't been tabled, I don't think that should keep the minister away. I'd be very disappointed if they were to lean on that crutch, we'll say.

Go ahead, Mr. Arnold.

• (1155)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have to agree with Mr. Perkins. It would very much clarify that we can question the minister on other matters relevant to her department if we removed the reference to the supplementary estimates (C). I propose that we remove the words "supplementary estimates (C) and" from the motion.

The Chair: That's a subamendment to the amended motion.

Mr. Mel Arnold: That's correct.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame Desbiens.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Chair, let me say that the idea of having the minister appear for only one hour is a concern. Indeed, for us, this means that we will have a scant eight minutes to ask questions. Considering the circumstances, could we have the minister appear for two hours?

[*English*]

The Chair: We can only deal with Mr. Arnold's subamendment, unless you're making a subamendment that it be two hours.

I'm sorry. We can't subamend a subamendment. It's getting confusing.

Is there any other talk to the subamendment by Mr. Arnold?

Go ahead, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Having the supplementary (C)s is an important thing for the minister to talk about. You've eloquently put it very well that we have the parameters of "by the end of February". We have the supplementary (C)s in there. I don't see the contradictory element unless we're looking at it through the lens of "Aha—if they're not tabled, the minister can't come".

We want to set this committee in the proper kind of flow, in the sense that if the minister does want to come and speak on the supplementary estimates (C) and all the elements in the mandate letter and other elements as brought up by the committee, I don't think it's contradictory; it's in addition. Having the minister there for the hour and the officials there for two hours provides a much-needed, wholesome and direct discussion with important people on the fisheries file.

I wanted to make those points. Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Small.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): I'd like to ask Mr. Kelloway why he thinks one hour is sufficient for discussion.

The Chair: Actually, you can't ask Mr. Kelloway anything right now, because we're talking about a subamendment. If you want to speak to the subamendment, you can. If not, we'll vote on it, and then if you have something to bring forward on the motion, you can.

Mr. Clifford Small: Okay, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: There is no other discussion on the subamendment.

I'll read it out as changed.

It reads, "That the committee invite the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard for one hour, and senior officials for two hours, to appear in consideration of the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard's mandate letter and other matters related to her department by the end of February."

Seeing no discussion, can I get a sense of whether we want to do thumbs-up or a recorded division?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Are we voting on that motion or the subamendment?

The Chair: You're voting on the subamendment put forward by Mr. Arnold.

Tina, could you do a recorded vote, please? I don't see any thumbs-up or thumbs-down.

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go back to the amendment to the subamendment—no; it's the motion as amended, or is it the amendment as amended?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I think we're voting on the motion now, Mr. Chair, if I'm not mistaken.

The Chair: But that was a subamendment to the amendment of Mr. Bachrach, wasn't it?

Tina, can you steer me in the right direction here? Where are we now?

The Clerk: We are now on the amendment of Mr. Kelloway, which has now been amended by the subamendment.

The Chair: Okay.

The amended amendment by Mr. Kelloway should read as follows: "That the committee invite the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard for one hour, and senior officials for two hours, to appear in consideration of the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard's mandate letter and other matters related to her department by the end of February."

Is there any discussion on that?

Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I would like to make an amendment that would change it from one hour with the minister to two.

The Chair: Thank you.

I don't see any hands up for discussion on that. It's as clear as anything. That is the clearest amendment we've had all day.

Go ahead, Mr. Small.

Mr. Clifford Small: It's very important to have the minister for two hours, considering that the main part of the fishing season is upon us. There are regulations that need to be dealt with. A lot of things in that mandate letter need to be discussed. We need to hear from the minister and she needs to hear from us. This is on behalf of our fishing industry.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Small.

I see no other hands up.

Tina, could you do a recorded vote again, please?

It's getting confusing. That's why I'm asking for a recorded vote.

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Thank you, Tina.

The amended amendment now reads as follows: "That the committee invite the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and senior officials, for two hours, to appear in consideration of the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard's mandate letter and other matters related to her department by the end of February."

The addition of the two hours is in there. That's what we're voting on.

I don't see any hands up, so can I take it that everybody is thumbs-up on this?

(Amendment as amended agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Now we move to the original motion as amended.

Does anybody want the amended motion read out, or do we all understand what we're voting on? I think we should all know what it is now.

I see only thumbs-up on the motion as amended. I don't see any thumbs-down.

(Motion as amended agreed to on division [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Thank you, everybody, for your patience on that one. I think we're all a little rusty trying to get out of the starting gate.

The next one with his hand up is Mr. Hardie.

• (1205)

Mr. Ken Hardie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As noted at the last meeting, I would like to move the following:

That the committee commit to a short study focusing on the risks flood control/mitigation systems along the lower Fraser River pose to wild salmon runs and the opportunity to address those risks as we recover from the floods and rebuild the flood control infrastructure.

The Chair: Thank you.

I see some hands up to speak to that.

Go ahead, Madame Desbiens.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Chair, with your permission, I'd like to table another motion.

[English]

The Chair: Not right now; I am taking everybody in order of hands up. We're doing them one at a time as we accept them. We're dealing now with Mr. Hardie's motion as it was just presented.

Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I think this is a good study. Just for clarification, though, what do we mean by "short study"? Usually we give at least a number of meetings, do we not?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: In this case I would suggest that it would depend on whether or not we add some scope. There have been some discussions about including more than just the lower Fraser valley, but we'll let others bring that up. I am thinking about one or two meetings at the very most, again clarifying that DFO has to be consulted when flood control measures are put in place. DFO doesn't actually do the work and doesn't pay for the work, but they do need to be consulted. That's the part we need to zero in on: What have they heard, and what have they given back in terms of input?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: I think this is an important motion. I have had briefings and actual conversations with the good folks at DFO and with people I know on the flooding situation in B.C. Our hearts go out to those individuals.

I have been thinking about this. I think the committee members deserve to be briefed on the situation, and that's why I'll be proposing that we add an amendment. I'm thinking that if we amend the motion to include that we ask for one meeting on the subject and that we include the department officials to appear at that meeting to provide a briefing to the committee, that would be one part.

The next part would be a question for the clerk, I suppose. With regard to the larger piece on infrastructure and making sure that we're within the mandate of the committee, can the clerk provide any insight that this aspect doesn't fall to, say, the infrastructure committee?

The Chair: Go ahead, Tina.

The Clerk: With regard to ensuring that this falls under the committee's mandate, I would suggest perhaps consulting with the analysts. They are our subject matter experts.

I think Michael is available.

• (1210)

The Chair: Michael, you've been called an expert, so let's hear your synopsis.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: It's definitely not this Michael.

Go ahead.

Mr. Michael Chalupovitsch (Committee Researcher): I thank the committee, and the clerk especially, for the compliment.

With regard to the flood control measures in the Fraser valley, a lot of it falls within provincial jurisdiction. There is a DFO component in terms of the effect on the salmon stocks, but the infrastructure and the flood mitigation measures are largely run by the Province of British Columbia.

I don't have all of the information in front of me, but I'm happy to provide anything in writing, if required.

The Chair: Thank you, Michael.

Does that answer your question, Mr. Kelloway?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Yes, I think it does.

I'm not sure if you need the amendment stated now, Mr. Chair, but I can do so if you wish.

The Chair: Could you read it out, and could you do it slowly so that the interpretation can follow it as well?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Reading slowly is no problem with me.

The Chair: Oh, don't I know it.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: My amendment adds "that the committee allot one meeting to the study and that the committee receive testimony from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans."

The Chair: Is that to be added at the end of the motion?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: That's correct, Mr. Chair. I didn't read the full motion, but right after "wild salmon runs and the opportunity to address those risks as we recover from the floods and rebuild the flood control infrastructure", I would add the amendment as stated.

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach, did you want to speak to that amendment?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I had a separate matter that I wanted to bring forward, but I understand the amendment is before us, so I'll wait.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Yes, I was going to speak to it. I wanted to clarify something with Mr. Hardie. His original motion talks about the flood mitigation—

The Chair: Can we speak to the amendment?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Yes. I'm getting to that.

Part of what he said that wasn't relevant is that it is provincial jurisdiction. Part of the problem with the lower Fraser for a B.C. resident is that the State of Washington had done some flood control and caused a lot of the problems for British Columbians, the rivers and the salmon as a result. I don't know if Ken wants to study that. It certainly would need more than one day. One day wouldn't cover it. Maybe we could get some clarity, because if we're going to dig into that, it's going to need an answer from our southern neighbours.

The Chair: Mr. Hardie, do you want to respond to Mr. Zimmer?

Mr. Ken Hardie: Yes, I do.

Mr. Zimmer raises a great point. There will be international treaties and a few other things involved. That would be separate from this study. When we get into the dynamics of the flooding in the lower Fraser, what was happening in Washington was clearly material, but this is about the DFO having an opportunity—particularly as things are restored or updated on the Canadian side—to have input into measures that will protect salmon. That was the intent or focus of my motion.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thanks, Ken.

The Chair: Is everybody clear now on the amendment as proposed by Mr. Kelloway?

Hearing no further discussion on the proposed amendment, does anybody want to propose that the amendment be read out again for clarification?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Yes.

The Chair: Tina, could you read out the amendment as proposed by Mr. Kelloway, please?

The Clerk: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The main motion is as follows:

That the committee commit to a short study focusing on the risks flood control/mitigation systems along the lower Fraser River pose to wild salmon runs and the opportunity to address those risks as we recover from the floods and rebuild the flood control infrastructure.

The amendment of Mr. Kelloway adds the following:

and that the committee allot one meeting to the study and that the committee receive testimony from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

I apologize for reading the whole motion.

● (1215)

The Chair: It doesn't hurt to refresh everyone's memory.

We've all heard the amendment. I know Mr. Bachrach wants to speak to the motion itself afterward. Is everybody in agreement with the amendment?

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

The Chair: Now we'll go back to the motion as amended.

Go ahead, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There was a brief mention about the geographical scope. Speaking on behalf of my colleague who sits on this committee, there's an interest in broadening the scope to include the Province of British Columbia, noting that there are flood mitigation structures elsewhere in the province that were affected by the recent events.

I propose an amendment. I propose that after the word "systems", we insert "in British Columbia, particularly", and then continue with "along the lower Fraser River". It would simply allow a broader discussion for folks in other parts of the province that have been similarly affected.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Arnold, do you want to speak to this proposed amendment? You had your hand up.

Mr. Mel Arnold: No, I won't speak to that amendment. I had a further one.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I agree with Mr. Bachrach's amendment because the communities of Merritt and Princeton were also significantly impacted and the flood control measures there obviously are in need of repair. If we add the consideration of those other communities or other pieces of infrastructure, one meeting may not be sufficient. I'm not sure. Perhaps we can just leave it open, in the sense that if we don't cover everything we need to cover in one meeting in one two-hour stretch, the committee at that time can consider adding additional time.

The Chair: Could I suggest to you, Mr. Hardie, that maybe we leave it as is for now? When we get to setting the actual schedule for meetings, even though we've said it would be one meeting for this one, maybe you could propose an extra meeting or whatever at that time.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Sure, that's fine.

The Chair: Thank you.

We've heard the proposed amendment by Mr. Bachrach, which is that we add, after the word "systems", "in British Columbia, particularly" and then continue with "along the lower Fraser River".

Seeing no more discussion, are we in favour of that amendment?

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

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Chair, I just want to clarify that we are really speaking about only one meeting. I recall that when we were doing the Pacific salmon study, we increased the scope of that study and kept adding meetings. I would like it recorded that we are in agreement that this study would be no more than one or two meetings.

I would like to hear Mr. Hardie's understanding so that there's no question afterwards as to what a "short" study means. Could he clarify?

Mr. Ken Hardie: Yes, I just spoke to that a moment ago regarding the additional scope of studying some of the other communities. Because we're really only asking for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to tell us, first, if they've been consulted and, second, what kind of input they've given to the process of restoring flood control measures, I'm fairly confident that even with the additional scope, one meeting will do.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hardie.

Seeing nothing else in the way of concern, can we vote on the motion as it has been amended by the two amendments? I don't think we need to read it out again. It's not a complicated motion.

(Motion as amended agreed to on division [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Arnold.

• (1220)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to move the motion for which notice was given on December 14 regarding scientific conclusions. I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of at least six (6) meetings to examine how the Department of Fisheries and Oceans

develops scientific conclusions including advice that it provides to the minister and how the minister applies scientific advice to ministerial decisions;

that the committee call witnesses including the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, senior department officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and persons who have directly contributed to the department's science and science processes to testify; and

that the committee report its conclusions and recommendations to the House.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Arnold.

We've heard the text of the motion to do this particular study. Are there any comments?

Go ahead, Mr. Morrissey.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Mr. Chair, the motion is not specific on where the study would want to get to. What specifically within the science division of the department does the motion attempt to get to?

For the last six years, our government has consistently increased the financing to significantly increase the capability of the department to monitor science and data. I'm not so sure. Are we attempting to undermine or second-guess the work and the independence of the scientific branch of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans? I have a real problem with that.

Could you speak a bit more to what the study is going to attempt to uncover?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For Mr. Morrissey, I would not want to make any presumptions about what the study may unravel or disclose. Canadians and we as members of Parliament deserve to know how the minister is making decisions and what science those decisions are based on, and to have her and the department describe that to us as parliamentarians so we can do better in our work as a committee on other studies and so we can understand what science is being used in the decision-making process.

That's the sole direction in which we would like to go with this study.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Well, it's interesting. At least we now have some science being conducted, whereas for nine years we had an eradication of the efforts to gather the science going into decisions. At least now we have a strengthened science division within the department. I believe that those reviews and that advice are always referenced, and when the minister makes decisions, those decisions become public, along with the advice that was given by the department.

I know that from time to time—and I have experienced this—fishers don't always agree, but it's important that the minister and the department have independence on the gathering of science and data. It is one area that must remain whole. It must remain impartial.

Again, I cannot support this motion in its present context, because it appears to me to be an attack on the independence of the science-gathering division of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

The Chair: Mr. Hardie is next.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Chair, there's a lot of science being conducted at any one time, a lot of research.

Could Mr. Arnold help focus this discussion and potentially the study? Was there a specific issue with the question of how science was gathered and applied in decision-making that appeared to him to be problematic?

● (1225)

Mr. Mel Arnold: In response to both Mr. Morrissey and Mr. Hardie, if the minister and the department are actually using science, I think they would be happy to come and explain how they are using that science so that we as a committee can continue to do an efficient job.

Further to Mr. Hardie, I think it would behoove the committee members to bring in witnesses who could testify either way on whether they think the application of science is sufficient and efficient for the minister's decisions.

Again, I'm not trying to draw conclusions before we even get into the study. This would simply be an opportunity for the minister and her department to describe to us how they use science and what science they use, and for us to call witnesses to hear how those science decisions, or the decisions that are based on science, are affecting them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Hanley is next.

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With all respect to Mr. Arnold, there's no premise on which to originate the motion, just as a follow-up to Mr. Hardie's point. I think there has to be a valid premise in the first place.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hanley.

Mr. Small, you had your hand up and it went down again.

Go ahead, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree somewhat with the comments around the scope of the study. It seems quite broad, and I'm not quite sure if I can envision what kind of witnesses and what kind of conversation would ensue, based on the definition of the study. I wonder if there might be an opportunity to narrow the scope a bit.

Certainly the application of science is a very interesting topic, and it would be informative to hear from the department in terms of how decision-makers and advisers interpret science and base their recommendations to the minister on that science.

Some of the questions that come up for me would include how the department deals with uncertainty, how the department establishes the credibility of different studies and sources of scientific

evidence and how the department balances the use of conventional science with other knowledge systems, but those are just questions that interest me. I'm not sure which questions interest the mover of the motion.

I think the motion would benefit from a bit of scope tightening so that the clerk, the chair and others really understand the direction we want to go as a committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

I have Mr. Small.

Mr. Clifford Small: Mr. Chair, I'd like to hear from our science officials at DFO to get a better understanding of how they go about making certain decisions in developing management plans, and how they perhaps might work with other countries' science.

I'd like to know what the plan is going forward and how our science will [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] changing ecosystems in light of global warming. I think it would be great to get us all up to speed. There are some new committee members here, and we'd like to have a better understanding of the process.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Small.

Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In addition to that, we've seen some recent correspondence from scientists for DFO in Newfoundland questioning the department's use of the recommendations going forward and whether they're being portrayed properly through the decision-making process. I don't know if all members are aware of that letter.

As well, under the new minister, we've seen some recent decisions in British Columbia that call into question whether science is being used in that decision-making process.

I think this area is important for us in understanding the two aspects of how the scientists are feeling about how they were included in the decision-making process and also how the minister herself is actually using them.

I think there is a lot of clarity in the motion and that there is a specific goal right there.

● (1230)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

We have Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I think I was next, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes. I'm sorry.

Your hand is not yellow. It's like a pale hand, and I didn't [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

Mr. Bob Zimmer: As a visiting member of the last fisheries and oceans committee in the last Parliament, I questioned the minister several times on decisions that seemed to counter the science, science that was available even to the public and was provided to the ministry. I think this is what Mr. Arnold is trying to get at.

To me, counter to some of the Liberal comments earlier, this motion gives us a perfect platform to see how the decisions are made and to refer to the science, if indeed that's the way those decisions are made. To me, it's an opportunity to clarify for all our user groups and stakeholders out there how DFO makes its decisions.

Again, as a B.C. resident, I will say that it needs to be abundantly clear how they do that, and this motion addresses that need.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Zimmer.

I have Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] my opinion, this is not a focused study, but I think that in a lot of ways what the members opposite are doing in terms of providing clarity on what they would like to study would be—although I would probably disagree with it—a definitive study. Right now, it seems like you could drive a Mack truck through this particular motion.

That said, I'm hearing a lot of comments that would potentially provide more substance to it.

The other element, I would say, is that one of the benefits of having the minister come for two hours is that we'll get to ask questions just like these.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kelloway.

Go ahead, Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: I think that the focus and the intent of this motion is perhaps misaimed. Mr. Zimmer actually landed on it: There needs to be an examination of how DFO makes decisions and how that relates to the minister and the development of policy. Science is one element that informs decision-making, but there are others.

Particularly when you look at the obligation that DFO has to employ the precautionary principle and the fact that science will never be 100% conclusive—we've certainly seen enough of that, particularly in oceans studies—Mr. Arnold should be invited to come back with something that more closely represents what Mr. Zimmer mentioned. It should focus on how science has developed, how mandates are provided by management to the science branch and then how the results from science—I won't even call them “conclusions”, because they are never very definitive—factor in to the overall decision-making process.

As it sits with this particular study and the way it's moved, I can't support it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hardie.

Go ahead, Mr. Cormier.

Mr. Serge Cormier: My comments are almost in line with everybody else's.

When I hear the word “science” coming from my Conservative colleagues, I always want to laugh so hard. Remember what was done to science when they were in power.

The minister will come for two hours if we just vote on it. Members will have a lot of opportunity to ask some questions of the minister about this. We have to trust science. Whether we like it or not, scientists at DFO are well trained and well equipped to get good data, whether it's on fisheries or other issues that they study. We have to trust them. I think DFO is doing a great job when it comes to collecting data in my region.

I'm going to vote against this motion. It's something that we can ask the minister about when she comes. We just have to let officials take some questions that we have regarding science when they come.

• (1235)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cormier.

Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have two comments.

On Mr. Cormier's comments, I'm flabbergasted that the government side is so afraid of looking at how the government uses the science they claim they use in the decision-making process.

To Mr. Hardie's comments, I understand what you're saying, but right in the motion it says “how the minister applies scientific advice to ministerial decisions.” It's pretty clear that the motion does contain exactly what Mr. Hardie was asking for with more specifications on the motion. It's already there.

I support this motion. I'm dumbfounded that the Liberals are afraid of having a study done on how they use science in their decision-making process.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

Mel, before I go back to you, I'm going to Madame Desbiens.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Chair, we were talking earlier about correspondence. We have not received that many documents on this, which means that I am missing information to help me form my opinion about this motion.

I would also like to clarify something. I spoke up a few moments ago to ask to be the next to present a motion. Although I was certainly speaking out of context, I thought I needed to in that moment, and I would like to make sure that I'm on the list.

[*English*]

The Chair: You are on the list. I don't know whether we're going to get that far, but you are on the list.

Mr. Bachrach, do you want to speak to this motion?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Very briefly. I had the same point as Ms. Desbiens. I would also like to be on the list.

The Chair: Thank you. If we get there, you'll be on it.

We'll go back to you, Mr. Arnold, for any response to those concerns.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think Mr. Perkins wrapped up most of it with regard to Mr. Hardie's questions about how the science is used, and that's what this study is looking at. What I have proposed here is that we find a better understanding of how the science is used in the decision-making process. It's not just the science, but whether the science gets overridden by other factors in the process as well, or whether other factors are brought in to temper the science or find the middle ground on certain issues. All of these things could be covered in this study.

It's simply six meetings for us to question the minister and her department on specifically how they are developing the science, what science they are using to make their decisions, and then how that science is used along with other processes in making the decisions. That's really what we're gearing up for here. I certainly hope we can get a better understanding of how the minister and her department make decisions that affect fishermen and the communities that depend on those fisheries.

Thank you.

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

I don't see any more hands up for further discussion on this particular motion.

From the comments I'm hearing, I think there will be some division on this motion, so I'll ask Tina to do a recorded vote on this one, please.

Tina, please proceed when you're ready.

The Clerk: Thank you.

This vote is on the motion by Mr. Arnold.

Mr. Chair, the vote is as follows: yeas 5; nays 5.

• (1240)

The Chair: Can I ask for a moment to talk to the clerk off-line, please?

Okay. We're back. I've spoken to the clerk. Obviously, now the decision falls on me to vote yea or nay to either move this forward or to go against it going forward. I will cast my vote. It's not a position I like being put in, but I will cast my vote as a nay.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: I want to give everyone a quick update on the list of hands that are up to bring motions forward.

Next up is Mr. Zimmer. Then I have Mr. Small, Mr. Cormier, Mr. Perkins, Ms. Desbiens and Mr. Bachrach. We have approximately a little over 15 minutes left in the committee meeting.

Mr. Zimmer, you're up.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thanks, Chair.

Thank you, everybody. I'll be quick. This motion was tabled originally on December 14, 2021

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) the committee undertake a study examining the scope and effects of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) on Canada's fisheries resources and the degradation of those resources caused by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;

that the committee receive witness testimony from the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Minister of National Defence, officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Department of National Defence and Canadians impacted by IUU fishing;

that the committee allot no fewer than eight two-hour meetings to receive said testimony;

that the committee also accept written briefs from individuals or organizations who wish to submit input; and

that the committee submit its findings with recommendations in a report to the House.

That's my motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: We've heard the motion, and I believe copies are being provided.

Mr. Arnold, you have your hand up.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Sorry, Mr. Chair. My apologies.

The Chair: That was a previous hand up.

Go ahead, Mr. Kelloway.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the time.

I think there's merit to the member's motion. Certainly I've heard about the foreign fishers in Canadian waters, especially on the west coast, but again I'll go back to saying that I think it's important to define the scope a little bit more on the illegal fishery in order for us to get the most we can out of the study.

I have a question for MP Zimmer, through you.

I wonder if you could speak to who the study is intended for or targeted at. It would be helpful for me to understand the intended scope.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Zimmer.

• (1245)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you for the question.

Mr. Kelloway, I don't know whether or how well you know the B.C. fisheries. There are many cases of these incidents on the coast and in rivers. The study is really just to get to the bottom of them and to dig into how we can do our diligence to help those sockeye and salmon make their way up the river without being caught illegally and used for nefarious purposes. That's the intent. It's simply to see that our threatened stocks are not threatened anymore and are protected as they should be and conserved as they should be. I think the intent of this study is to address that.

Hopefully that clarifies the scope.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Zimmer. Mr. Hardie is next.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Through you, there are two things, one of which is more of a procedural thing.

It's not included in the motions, but when it's time to send the study on to Parliament, we should also make Standing Order 109, which requests a government response, a common element of all of the studies that we send forward to Parliament so that we get the most efficient use of time and so that the government is automatically put on notice that we want to hear from them about the study and the recommendations.

The second one goes back to something Mr. Zimmer said. Is it your intention to focus only on foreign fishing, or would you be looking at domestic fishing activities as well? I think I heard you refer to "upriver". I just want to get some clarification there. If that is the case, then I'll have an amendment.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I think it involves all illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. That's the intent. It's for coastal fishing or otherwise.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Thank you.

In that respect I'd propose an amendment to add the following words to the motion: "and that the motion is without prejudice to aboriginal and treaty rights".

The Chair: Mr. Hardie, do you also want to add a request for a response from the government, since you mentioned that earlier?

Mr. Ken Hardie: We could, but it's not necessary. That's something that can be done when we vote at the conclusion of the study to send it to Parliament. We can include that wording then.

The Chair: Okay. I thought you wanted to include it now. You're adding as an amendment "and that the motion is without prejudice to aboriginal and treaty rights".

Mr. Ken Hardie: That's correct.

The Chair: Okay.

Is there any discussion on the amendment?

I see that Mr. Arnold has his hand up, and Mr. Kelloway. Is it to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Mr. Chair, I will take my hand down, because I actually was going to speak to the important intervention that MP Hardie made.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now there are no hands up, so hearing no discussion on the proposed amendment, we will vote on the amendment.

Is there any dissent?

Okay. I will take it that all are in favour of the amendment.

We will—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Chair, just to be clear, I think you're moving quickly through the discussion into the vote. I don't know if we realized that you were calling the vote.

The Chair: There were no more hands up for any discussion on the proposed amendment. That's why I moved to go to a vote on it.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Just to be clear, has that vote occurred?

The Chair: No, it hasn't.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Okay. That's what I was clarifying.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: I see that Mr. Kelloway has his hand up now. No, he doesn't. Okay.

Now Mr. Perkins has his hand up.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Just as a clarification from the mover of the amendment, does this mean that we will not study any [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Hardie.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Chair, usually this issue is normally focused on foreign fisheries, but if domestic fisheries, particularly upriver, are going to be included, we just need to state that the work we do and the discussions we have are done without prejudice to aboriginal and treaty rights. That needs to be reflected and recognized in the process that we would follow.

• (1250)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hardie.

I have Mr. Cormier.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Just for the new members—and maybe Mr. Zimmer—this amendment was passed in the last Parliament. It was agreed to by, I think, all of us.

Mr. Zimmer, just for your knowledge, we all agreed to it in the last Parliament.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you, Mr. Cormier.

The Chair: Hands are going down faster than they're going up. I see a hand that's still up from Mr. Perkins. That's down now, and Mr. Cormier's hand is down.

Is there any more discussion on the amendment to the motion?

Seeing none, can I assume that we're all okay with the amendment? I see thumbs-up on all sides. Is anyone opposed?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Now we will deal with the motion as amended. Seeing no more discussion, I will ask all those in favour to so indicate.

It's thumbs-up all the way around.

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

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you, everyone.

The Chair: We'll now go to Mr. Small.

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to move:

That the committee undertake a comprehensive study of pinnipeds that would examine the ecosystem impacts of pinniped overpopulation in the waters of Quebec, eastern and western Canada; international experience in pinniped stock management; the domestic and international market potential for various pinniped products; social acceptability; and the socio-cultural importance of developing active management of predation for coastal and First Nations communities with access to the resource;

that the committee invite witness appearances including Indigenous organizations, scientific experts, DFO officials and experts and officials from countries such as Scotland, Norway and Iceland that have conserved and rebuilt fish stocks by balancing pinniped populations;

that the committee allot no fewer than eight two-hour meetings to receive said testimony;

that the committee also accept written briefs from individuals or organizations who wish to submit input; and

that the committee submit its findings with recommendations in a report to the House.

And.... I guess I can't change it from there. That's my motion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Small.

I see some hands up.

Go ahead, Mr. Morrissey.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That is a very good motion. This was approved by the fishery committee in the last Parliament. I believe it was unanimous when it was tabled. It was probably Mr. Arnold at the time.

I would suggest, Mr. Small, a minor amendment. I'm requesting it because in the past, this committee undertook a number of very substantive studies, two in particular, for which the committee travelled. The importance of seeing what was happening on site.... This was on marine protected areas and small craft harbours, and it was valuable.

I would suggest, and move as an amendment, that you include that the committee request to travel to such countries as Scotland, Norway and Iceland when it is safe and appropriate to travel internationally in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This has been batted around for some time. We had a brief intervention in another study we were doing when senior officials from, I believe, the country of Norway were appearing before the committee. When they were questioned pointedly a number of times on how they dealt with the seal situation in those countries, the simple answer was that it just went away. Well, we're not that naive.

My suggestion, Mr. Chair, having been a member of this committee for some time, is that we consider this when appropriate. It's very good to talk to the people on the ground, especially the fishers involved. I would suggest this amendment to Mr. Small's motion. It's a very good study.

• (1255)

The Chair: Mr. Morrissey, could I ask you to read into the record the amendment that you're making?

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Thank you.

The bottom line of the original motion says, "that the committee also accept written briefs from individuals or organizations who wish to submit input".

I would add, "and that the committee request to travel to countries such as Scotland, Norway and Iceland when it is safe and appropriate to travel internationally in light of the COVID-19 pandemic; that the Chair be empowered to coordinate the travel."

The Chair: We've all heard the amendment. Does anybody want to speak to it?

Go ahead, Madame Desbiens.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Chair, [*Technical difficulty*] that I wanted to comment on. However, if it is not permitted for me to do this now, I will do so later. I do not want to muddy the waters, as that is dangerous.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Arnold, do you want to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd just like some clarity from Mr. Morrissey. Should travel not be possible, would that perhaps delay the study? Can we adjust his amendment so that the continuation of the study not be dependent on travel?

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Mr. Chair, I agree with Mr. Arnold. I would not want to see this study delayed or put off. If you look at the number of studies before the committee, if we can, it would be advisable. Possibly we could clarify [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] prioritizing the studies going forward, but that's not the intention of my amendment, Mr. Arnold.

The Chair: Just to interject, in the past it never has affected the study if travel, for some reason, had to be deleted. It's just a request to travel should we want to do that, and to be able to line up the prospective witnesses and whatnot to attend those sessions if it were permitted.

Seeing no other interjections—

Mr. Zimmer, there's that pale hand of yours again.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I'd better change that.

I was just going to speak in support of the motion as long as, as has already been said, whether we can travel or not doesn't impede the meetings from occurring. I think travelling is a very important part of it, but again, I'm supportive of the study.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any other discussion on the proposed amendment by Mr. Morrissey?

Seeing none, can we vote on the proposed amendment?

(Amendment agreed to on division [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Now we go back to the main motion as amended. I think we heard Mr. Small give a good explanation of the motion and the amendment, so does anybody have any discussion? No.

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

The Chair: Madame Desbiens, I know you have your hand up. Is that on the vote?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: No. I am a bit late, but I did vote on the motion. There is no problem. I simply wanted to share an important anecdote about pinnipeds, but I'll refrain from doing so, since the clock is ticking. I'm ready to vote.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, the vote is actually done and the motion as amended has passed on division.

Now we'll go to Mr. Cormier.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I didn't know I was next. I think everybody got a—

• (1300)

The Chair: You only have about a minute, so you'll get to introduce your motion and then we'll probably have to discuss it at the next meeting.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Perfect. I think everybody got the motion. I'll read it in French, which will be a little more helpful for me.

[*Translation*]

I move the following motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study to examine the fishery management measures put in place to protect North Atlantic right whales, in order to evaluate the impact these measures have had on the reduction of right whale deaths in Atlantic Canada and Quebec as well as the impact on the economy of coastal communities in these regions and to provide the government with options and recommendations to improve these measures;

that the committee call witnesses including senior officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada and interested stakeholder groups to testify before the committee;

that the committee present its conclusions and recommendations in a report to the House of Commons;

and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[*English*]

Mr. Chair, this was a motion that I moved in the last Parliament, and it was adopted by all the members of this committee. If my time is up, I'm willing to stop there. If you let me, I can continue, but I can also continue in the next meeting and give a broader scope of what the motion is all about.

The Chair: The time is up. I can ask for unanimous consent to extend for a few minutes so that Mr. Cormier can finish with his motion, but I don't think we'll get to any discussion on it or a vote right now.

Serge, I'm not seeing any dissent. It's up to you. If you want to finish what you have to say, then we can get right to it at the next meeting, or you can start off the next meeting with a short intervention.

Mr. Serge Cormier: Sure. I know everybody probably has other meetings, but just quickly, as I said, it was passed in the last Parliament, and this is probably a study for next fall. I don't think we'll have time this fall.

Again, for those who are aware of the North Atlantic right whale issue, since 2017 in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and some other regions—Nova Scotia and P.E.I., and Quebec also—those whales are moving in our areas. We put measures in place in 2017 to make sure that there would be fewer deaths and fewer interactions with the fishermen. A lot of great measures were put in place by our government. A lot of good work was done by the fishermen's groups and a lot of good work was done with the environmental groups also, so I think there's a good opportunity there to look at the measures that were put in place to make sure that we're not only adapting to the reality of our fishing community but also working to protect those right whales.

I can elaborate a little more at the next meeting, but this is what it's all about. I think we will all benefit from having witnesses come to the committee to say what is going well and also what is going wrong with some of those measures so that we can improve them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cormier.

Before we leave for today, I'm going to add that we didn't get through the full list of motions. Some people wanted to present different motions for studies.

Is the committee okay if I say that at the start of the next meeting we'll deal with the motions that have been put on notice and do that first, and then try to get to the scheduling?

On the scheduling, we don't have to go too far ahead. We can do that as we go. Once we figure out what the first study is and allocate however many meetings for it, we can move forward from there. On Thursday we'll first finish up on the motions that have been put on the record, and then we'll get to the actual scheduling.

Seeing no dissent, I want to say a big thank you to everyone for their patience. It will take a little while to get back into the rhythm of everything.

Again, thank you to the clerk, the analysts and, of course, to the people who help us out with the translation. There's a big thank you to everyone.

Enjoy your day, and hopefully everyone will be back safe and sound on Thursday.

Have a good evening. The meeting is adjourned.

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