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• (0920)

[English]

The Joint Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Adam Thompson): Good morning, honourable members. There is a quorum.

As Senate joint clerk of this committee, it is my duty to preside over the election of the Senate co-chair, and I am now prepared to receive motions to that effect.

Are there any nominations?

Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.): Clerk, I am pleased to nominate Ms. Susan Kadis for the position of House of Commons co-chair of the committee.

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Adam Thompson): I'm sorry, Mr. Powers. I'm accepting motions for the Senate co-chair at this time.

Monsieur Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Yes. I would like to propose Senator Trenholme Counsell for co-chair.

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Adam Thompson): Are there any other nominations?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): What an excellent nomination.

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Adam Thompson): Seeing none, I will put the question. It is moved by Mr. Simard that the honourable Senator Trenholme Counsell be co-chair of this committee. Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Adam Thompson): Then I will invite Ms. Trenholme Counsell to take the chair, and I'll call on my colleague from the House of Commons to preside over the election of the House officers of this committee.

The Joint Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Thomas Hall): Honourable Senators, messieurs et mesdames les députés, I am ready to receive motions for the election of a chair from the House of Commons.

Mr. Russ Powers: To retract my first mistake, it would be my honour to nominate Ms. Susan Kadis as the House of Commons co-chair for this committee.

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Thomas Hall): Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Thomas Hall):

I am now ready to receive motions for the nomination of a vice-chair.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): I'd like to nominate Maurice Vellacott for vice-chair.

The Joint Clerk (Mr. Thomas Hall): Are there other motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. It's a pleasure to co-chair my first joint House and Senate committee. I look forward to working with all of you today and in the future.

I believe as the first item of business we go directly to approval of routine procedures.

I believe everyone has the motions before them. Hopefully you've had the opportunity to briefly look at them.

I think some issues we need to consider today include whether we want to lower the quorum number, which is in the draft report, as well as the striking of a subcommittee. Having spoken to some people who've been on the committee before, I see there seems to be a general direction toward having the entire committee as a subcommittee, a steering committee—unless the committee sees otherwise.

As well, my understanding is that this committee has met approximately four times per year in the past, at times a little more, depending, again, on the will of the committee.

Also, just to mention briefly, the estimates obviously are on a very severe timeline, but if the committee is interested, we definitely could have some consideration of that—even though I understand it's past for this particular year. As well, some members have mentioned to me already the idea of a tour of the current, I guess renovated, library, which I think is very apropos. I know for me personally it will assist greatly.

Those are some of the ideas to consider as well as the motions.

Do we have a mover of the motion or motions?

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): I so move.

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): You are moving all of the motions?

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Yes.

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): Is it agreed?

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

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): I understand that's essentially it for today, unless there are any comments or questions.

Mr. Vellacott.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I understand that there may be some need to consider the hiring of the librarian.

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): Yes, that is included in the first motion. This will be discussed at the subcommittee level.

As well, I believe, unless I hear otherwise, we should proceed to make arrangements to have a tour some time next week, at the convenience of members, as well as have the subcommittee meet to discuss the mandate and direction of the committee. We will have a meeting next week as well as the tour, if that's agreed.

Thank you very much.

We can adjourn now, unless there are any further comments.

• (0925)

[*Translation*]

Senator Jean Lapointe (Saurel, Lib.): Would Ms. Trenholme Counsell have anything to say this morning?

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): Senator Lapointe.

[*Translation*]

Senator Jean Lapointe: Does Senator Trenholme Counsell have anything to say this morning?

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell (New Brunswick, Lib.)): Thank you very much.

Congratulations, Madam Co-Chair.

I think this is an excellent turnout, my colleagues from the Senate, colleagues from the House of Commons, and staff.

When Senator Austin suggested that I might like to be involved in this, I was delighted.

[*Translation*]

I was delighted because during the past few years, in New Brunswick, I mainly focused my attention on libraries and the importance of books in the life of our youth and our families.

[*English*]

During the last six years of my life I've really focused on literacy, and I have recently had some other opportunities to work with the libraries in my province. To have even this very small role to play with the Library of Parliament is indeed a great privilege, so I will be attentive and here to support all of us in whatever we may be able to do. It is a great privilege.

Of course, there is great excitement coming up with the restoration. Maybe we can find some new ways to make the Canadian people more aware of their library. I would like to think that we might do something innovative in that respect.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much and good luck. It is a privilege for me to work with you.

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): Yes, Senator?

Senator Jean Lapointe: I think if we want to be a committee that involves itself seriously, four times a year is not enough. I think we should meet at least once a month, because I have some suggestions to make to this committee, and we have to get involved and be dynamic. Although the book situation is a calm situation, I am not a calm person, and I want to see activities from this committee, especially since my first point will be on the proposed new joint committee of the arts. This is a proposition I will bring to this committee. I brought it forth the last time, and the ex-president was very happy about this suggestion.

My second point is that we have to study a lot more closely the situation of *le poète lauréat du Parlement*, which I think is a ridiculous situation.

[*Translation*]

He gets a mere pittance.

[*English*]

I am sorry, I don't know how to say this in English. He's underpaid, and I don't believe in this...I'm not going to use bad words—sometimes I do—but it is another

[*Translation*]

absolutely absurd and ridiculous situation to alternate between a francophone and an anglophone poet every two years. I know budgets are limited but we are going to fight in order to get both a francophone and an anglophone poet. The one we had previously did a great job on a mere pittance and his secretary worked for free. We have to be more dynamic. We have to do more that we are presently doing in our country, particularly for our young students. This is my view and I wanted to make it clear this morning. Some members may find me somewhat aggressive but I am not inactive and I love this committee. I think we can bring much more to Canadians from ocean to ocean and more particularly to Quebeckers.

• (0930)

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): Thank you, Senators, both of you, for your comments.

I actually concur with you. I'm hoping we can take this committee in new and vital directions, and I believe the timing is right for that. Subject to the committee, we definitely can meet more than four times per year. This committee can basically write its own destiny, like many others, and I look forward to the subcommittee discussions apropos that.

As well, if members have any suggestions for the subcommittee, please bring those to the attention of the joint chairs prior....

Yes, Dominic.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Thank you, Madam Chair, Senator Trenholme Counsell.

I agree with Senator Lapointe. I think we can do some interesting things at this committee. There are interesting subjects we can learn about that we can bring to the attention of our colleagues at both places.

By way of suggestion, Madam Chair, I like the idea of a visit by the subcommittee to the library. We have all seen the construction, and I am curious to see what's going on underneath that scaffolding.

Also, when we were elected or appointed, I'm sure we all received a briefing from the Library of Parliament. It was a document at some of the orientation sessions about what services they have, what things they can do to help members of both places, and what support they provide to committees. At one of the meetings we may want to invite the senior staff of the library to just give all of us a bit of an overview of what are the different branches. It's a chance for us to meet some of the directors and different groups and hear what kinds of things they work on and how many staff they have.

Maybe it's a lazy way for me to receive a briefing that I think will be helpful in my own work as an MP, but I would be curious to hear a presentation, which doesn't have to be a long one, on what services they offer. We may also think of other things we may want to suggest they look at.

It's just a suggestion, Madam Chair.

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): Yes. I think that's an excellent idea, Mr. LeBlanc, and we can definitely arrange that.

Yes, Monsieur Boulianne.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Thank you. I agree full heartedly with you. When we were appointed to the Committee on the Library of Parliament, we were told that it only sat two or three times a year and that it was not as important as other committees.

I think one of our first goals should be to enhance the status of our committee. I think this is important. Senator Lapointe said that the committee should sit more and should deal with different subjects and inform members of Parliament of everything knew we have in our libraries.

I had the opportunity to do so and I think it is important for us to enhance our status relative to other committees. Our committee does a great job. No member of Parliament can do any useful work without using the Library of Parliament and accessing documents and help. I fully agree on that.

We can definitely decide to sit more often.

[*English*]

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): I agree with you.

Are there any other comments or questions?

Yes, Senator.

[*Translation*]

Senator Jean Lapointe: Can I speak one more time?

[*English*]

Am I allowed to come back?

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): Yes.

Hon. Jean Lapointe: The main problem with my proposition is that I saw Senator Grafstein and he didn't want to talk about it.

The poet situation is very important for me. I don't accept that they are badly treated, the people who come from Saskatchewan, Quebec, Ontario, or *les provinces maritimes*. I don't accept that they are very poorly treated. I know it's an old cliché that poets are poor, but we don't have to *tourner le fer dans la plaie*.

I was told this is Senator Grafstein's idea, so I would like him to come and answer questions, because I have a few for him.

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): Thank you very much.

Are there any other comments?

Yes, Mr. Eyking.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Excuse me for my ignorance, but can I have clarification from the senator on what this whole thing is about poets?

I don't understand where you are coming from, sir. Maybe somebody else can explain it to me.

● (0935)

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): There is a poet appointed to the Library of Canada who is in residence, I understand. Obviously this is related to that issue. The actual specifics of it I don't know as yet, but we certainly can speak to the senator. I think it would be more appropriate that he would be here to have this discussion. I think we can invite the poet to come as well and get a briefing on this. I guess that's the most appropriate way to handle it.

It certainly has intrigued the committee. I must say I feel very positive about the direction of this committee. I myself have a love of books and resources and communications per se, and I sense here great enthusiasm and interest in doing something and bringing this committee to new heights. I understand when Dr. Bennett chaired this committee she did a great deal with it to maximize the profile and connection to Canadians as well and to move it in a positive direction. I'm confident this committee will do the same.

Are there any other comments?

May I have a motion to adjourn? Mr. Simard.

Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Joint Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis): Thank you. See you next week.

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