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—
Chair

The Honourable Andrew Telegdi

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•(0905)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee: I call the meeting to order.

The first order of business is the election of a chair. I am prepared to take motions to that effect.

Mr. Mills.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): I nominate Mr. Tonks.

The Clerk: It is proposed by Mr. Mills that Mr. Tonks be elected as chair of the committee.

[Translation]

Mr. Paradis supports this motion. Are there any other motions?

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Clerk: Now, if members wish, we can go on to the elections of the vice-chairs. No problem with that?

Mr. Tonks.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): I nominate Mr. Richardson.

The Clerk: Mr. Tonks would nominate Mr. Richardson as vice-chair of the committee from the official opposition.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): I second that.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: Now we can elect the second vice-chair. I would be prepared to take a motion.

Mr. Richardson.

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): I nominate Monsieur Bigras.

[Translation]

The Clerk: Moved, that Mr. Bigras be elected vice-chairman of the committee. The motion is seconded by Mr. Watson.

(Motion agreed to)

With your permission, I am now going to invite Mr. Tonks to chair the committee.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, members of the committee.

I have just one comment. I've had an opportunity to go around and talk with each of you and I'm very excited about the possibilities of

this committee and the backgrounds that you all bring to the committee. We all stand for creating a legacy for our children and our children's children, and to a large extent that begins with the environment.

So I do appreciate first being elected as chair. Thank you for your confidence. I'll work hard to continue to earn that. Thank you for selecting this committee to serve on, because I think it is highly relevant. We will do everything together to make it a very meaningful experience, fulfilling personally but meaningful in terms of the causes we are pursuing together.

I would like to also congratulate the vice-chairs. Traditionally the vice-chairs, with the chair, act as the steering committee for the committee, meeting between meetings to develop an agenda and bring it back, and continue to take soundings with respect to how we are progressing. Under our routine orders, you will have an opportunity to reflect on whether you wish the steering committee to continue in that mode.

I think what we will do now, if you wouldn't mind, is this. When we met with the minister we did go around and introduce ourselves, so perhaps without going into any of our backgrounds, because we did that, we'll just give our names so we can get to know each other a little bit better.

Nathan, perhaps we could start with you. We'll just work our way around.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): I'm Nathan Cullen from Skeena—Bulkley Valley in northwestern B.C.

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): My name is Christian Simard, and I am from Beauport—Limoilou. I used to work in the environmental field, as director general of the Union québécoise pour la conservation de la nature. I have also been a member of several round tables on the environment and sustainable development, and have sat on committees of the International Joint Commission which focused on the Great Lakes. I'm pleased to be here now, to be a member of this committee and to take part in its work.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): My name is Bernard Bigras, and I am the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, and the Bloc Québécois environment critic. I have been a member of the committee for several years. I was elected in my riding in 1997. I was the Bloc Québécois environment critic until the year 2000, when I left that position to become chair of the national caucus of the Bloc Québécois from 2000 to 2002. I then became environment critic once again, and have been to this day.

[English]

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): I am Brian Jean from Fort McMurray—Athabasca, northern Alberta.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): In the spirit of keeping it short and sweet, I'm Jeff Watson. I represent the riding of Essex. I am the first auto worker ever elected to Parliament and I am the first Conservative in my riding in 46 years. I certainly thank the people of Essex, who have environmental concerns at the forefront of their minds, for giving me the opportunity to be here to actually do something that will make a real difference, not only for our current generation but for the generations to come.

Mr. Lee Richardson: I'm Lee Richardson from Calgary, from clean air and clean water, and I want to keep it that way.

● (0910)

The Chair: You might like to know that Lee also was an executive assistant to John Diefenbaker. I'm sure that chronologically dates you, but....

Mr. Lee Richardson: I was 11.

The Chair: You were very young.

Mr. Bob Mills: Thank you, Alan, and congratulations. I know you'll do a great job.

I'm Bob Mills. I was elected in 1993. I was foreign affairs critic for seven years, health critic for a year and a half, and on the environment committee from whenever until now. I will be the senior critic for our party. I gave my first environmental speech in 1972 on the conservator society and so have been involved in environmental issues. I am particularly interested in alternate energy and where we can go with that in the future.

I spent the summer visiting incinerators in Europe, and windmills and geothermal and so on. I have a particular interest in that.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Good morning, I'm David McGuinty. I'm the member for Ottawa South, having been elected in June for the first time.

Congratulations, Alan.

I'm not a stranger to this committee. For almost the past nine years I've been the head of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, and for nine years previous to that I spent most of my life abroad, working in different developing countries as an economist on corporate negotiations, the environment, and other issues.

It's a pleasure to be here.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): My name is Denis Paradis, and I have been the member for Brome—Missisquoi for 10 years. My riding is located south of Montreal, about an hour's drive from that city, and it is also facing some important environmental issues, concerning the Appalachian Mountains, in particular—some parks are involved, among other things. This range is an extension of the range that is on American territory. In addition, there are two international lakes, Lake Champlain and Lake Memphrémagog, which have required and will require again in the

future the attention of the International Joint Commission, because of environmental problems involving the United States.

[English]

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: I am Yasmin Ratansi from the riding of Don Valley East, and I look forward to working with all of you.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Congratulations, Mr. Chairman.

I am Bryon Wilfert from Richmond Hill, Ontario. I am Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment and past Parliament Secretary to the Minister of Finance. I have been heavily involved over the years, as president of the FCM, with district energy issues and the environment.

The Chair: Thank you, all of you, for that overview.

My background is mainly municipal, over 30 years—it's my 30th year in elected office—as mayor of one of the municipalities of Toronto, the chairman of Metropolitan Toronto, and the chairman of the Greater Toronto Area. It seems like always the chairman...what is that, always the bride and never the bridesmaid, or something like that?

An hon. member: Always the bridesmaid.

The Chair: Yes, that's what it is. Oh well, Mark Twain wouldn't really appreciate my quotes.

Anyway, in my final role—I think I mentioned it, and I think it is most relevant to our committee—as chairman of the Greater Toronto Area, it was my opportunity to work with the mayors and all the elected members of the Greater Toronto Area to try to develop a sustainable growth strategy, underpinned by servicing and transportation that would deal with urban sprawl. Some of those elements are in what we are doing, whether it's our ecosystem, our rivers and watersheds across the country, whether it's the quality of water or air. A lot of those same elements are in the agenda that we will be pursuing to some extent through this committee.

I certainly appreciate the skills and the background that all of you bring to the committee. I hope our collective wisdom, as I say, will be fully brought to bear on the issues that we deal with.

With that, we also have routine motions. Just to explain, routine motions are of an administrative nature. If there are any motions, we also usually deal with them through notice of motion provisions, and we can talk about that in a few minutes. I think the clerk has distributed the routine motions.

The first routine motion is on services of analysts from the Library of Parliament. The clerk can correct me if I'm wrong, but the researchers from the Library of Parliament serve the whole committee, they are non-partisan, they take direction from the committee, and through the steering committee they will also bring in research to bear on issues that we're dealing with.

The motion is that the committee retain the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament, as needed, to assist committee in its work, at the discretion of the chair. Is there any discussion on that? Is it necessary to have a mover and seconder? No? All right.

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

• (0915)

Tim is our researcher. We're going to pass around his CV.

Thank you, Tim. It's good to have you aboard again.

The next motion is to receive and publish evidence in the absence of a quorum: that the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present, provided that at least—and we need to establish what the quorum is for the committee—including one member of the opposition.

Formerly it said “at least five members are present, including one member of the opposition”. Those were the provisions.

Discussion? Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think that the number of members, that is to say five, was chosen because of our previous practice in the committee. But things have changed: we used to be 16 and we are now 12. Thus, there are four fewer members than there used to be on the committee. I think it would be normal if we decreased the number needed for the quorum. I suggest that we set it at three, including a member of the opposition. In my opinion, this would allow us to make sure that the committee is functional.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Mills.

Mr. Bob Mills: We certainly should reflect the fact that the opposition is a majority on the committee. Three is not very many. I think there should be a reference to more than one of the opposition members. I'm not exactly sure what the motion should be, but three seems like a very small number. If it is three, I guess we'd say one member of the government, because the chair will be a member of the government, and two members of the opposition.

The Chair: Any other speakers?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Chair, I think three is too low. I agree with Bob Mills that it should reflect the opposition. We are twelve at the moment, so five would be not even 50%. If we are really serious about environmental issues, as we all claim we are, then we should be here. So I think five would be fine.

The Chair: Are there any further speakers?

Is there a consensus with respect to trying with five, still, even though we have a reduced number, but increasing the number of opposition to two? So it would be five, plus two of the opposition. In the last sitting we had one. The provision was that it's five inclusive of one being a member of the opposition. The suggestion here is that, in view of the situation, it be two of the opposition.

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

• (0920)

The next issue is time limits for witness statements and questioning, that witnesses be given x minutes. In the last sitting it was ten minutes. So at the discretion of the chair, during the

questioning of witnesses, there be allocated ten minutes for the first questioner....

Actually, on the first part, let me give you what it was last time, and then you can reflect on it: that, at the discretion of the chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated five minutes for the first questioner of each party; and that thereafter x minutes be allocated to each subsequent questioner, alternating between government and opposition parties.

The only thing we would extract from the last one would be the extension of minutes. So it would be five minutes and five minutes. Basically, each member would be able to question the witness for five minutes. My understanding also was that at the rule of the committee, this could be extended. If there was a particular line of questioning, we would go to the committee and the committee would vote to extend it for, say, another three minutes.

I want to emphasize that the rules of proceedings are also at the will of the committee from time to time to amend and so on, in terms of the number of minutes that we apply to the questioning of witnesses. The dynamics are important in terms of developing a line of questioning. Sometimes we want to be a little flexible on that.

This is the way it would read: that witnesses be given five minutes for their opening statement; and that, at the discretion of the chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated five minutes for the first questioner of each party; and that thereafter five minutes be allocated to each subsequent questioner, alternating between government and opposition parties.

Any discussion? Mr. Mills.

Mr. Bob Mills: The problem, first of all, with the witnesses is that five minutes is a very short period of time in which to try to get in everything you want. If a witness comes from across the country to testify before us, it's pretty darn tough to do it in five minutes. I know we often give them extensions and so on, but I think we should really look at maybe ten minutes for the witness.

In other committees I've been on, we've quite often had a first round of ten minutes. Again, that's the first go at a witness, and it gives you the opportunity to really expand on what you want to get from them. Then the second round can go to five minutes, and then it can go back and forth.

Eugene, you can correct me here, but I can't recall a time when we didn't have the opportunity to go after the witness down the road.

It's tough to do that in five minutes. I would propose that we go to ten minutes for the witness, ten minutes for the first round, and then five minutes for the second round.

The Chair: Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, I have no difficulty with ten minutes, the proviso being that we always have the witnesses submit their presentations in writing. As well, we do not need to have them read them all verbatim. That's number one.

Number two, the subsequent five minutes is fine, but I would like clarification regarding the questioning. I would prefer that we go alternating. In other words, we start with the Conservatives, we come to the Liberals, and we go back and forth. Otherwise, what tends to happen is that for Liberal members on the government side, obviously, only one speaks after three or four. I've been on committees where they alternate back and forth, for the flow.

The Chair: Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to begin with the issue which concerns me the least. I would tend to agree with Mr. Mills' proposal, which is to give the witnesses five minutes, giving us more time for questions. The reason for this is that very often the clerk sends documents to our office which we can read in advance. It is important that we question witnesses to move the debate forward. I remember that in the past we often ran out of time to ask our questions. For that reason, I would prefer that we adopt a more flexible rule in that regard.

However, I am fiercely opposed to Mr. Wilfert's suggestion that the Conservative Party and the government party alternate. I think the system we had before allowed us to function well. Everyone agreed on that and we were able to hold some fruitful debates without causing any frustration on either side. As for alternating, I think that we should continue to work as we did before, that is to say, Conservative Party, Bloc Québécois, and so on.

• (0925)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. David McGuinty: Perhaps I can offer this, having sat through 25 or 30 or 40 presentations to different committees over the last decade. For the people who come in, it's extraordinarily frustrating to present for any less than ten minutes. Even though a document may have been presented in advance, five minutes is not, in my estimation, enough time for a witness to at least bring the committee up to speed on the salient points the witness wants to make to the committee.

I think it also behooves us to allow each member, as Mr. Mills suggested, a ten-minute period in which to ask probative questions. The nature of the work we're doing here is so horizontal, and so complex, that I think it's deserving of a bit more time.

I would make a plea, Mr. Chairman, that we perhaps reduce the number of witnesses and instead provide witnesses with more time with the committee, as opposed to trying to rush through, in a morning session, five or six or seven witnesses, with everyone leaving the room at the end of the morning with a palpable sense of frustration.

The Chair: Any other speakers? Mr. Richardson.

Mr. Lee Richardson: Perhaps we could dispose of this more quickly if we separated this item into two lots. In terms of the time for speakers, I think we might find a consensus on ten minutes. Then we can go on to the next question.

The Chair: Mr. Wilfert, and then we'll go back to that.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, it's wonderful, the spirit of cooperation here.

I was going to suggest that we split it, but I want clarification on the question. I do not want a situation where we have four on the other side that go first and one on this side. We're in a new spirit, a new situation. I would suggest a little give and take on that side.

I have no problem with the ten minutes and then the questioning. It's fairly normal. If you want to dispose of that, we can do that fairly quickly, I think.

The Chair: Let's deal with the first part. Are we in agreement that the witnesses should be given ten minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I take your suggestion under advisement, Mr. McGuinty, with respect to the number of witnesses we have.

Are we all in favour of ten minutes in the first round?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: And five minutes in the second round?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Now, as I understand the rotation, it will be alternating between government and opposition parties. That's after the second round. So we're concerned about the first round.

Mr. Wilfert, you're suggesting that it be...?

• (0930)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, if it were the first three opposition, that would mean the first half-hour would be for the opposition. I am suggesting that you may want to start off with two opposition, then go to one on the government side, then back to the opposition, and back to the government side. I would see that as a reasonable approach.

The Chair: All right. There's something on the table.

Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I want to make sure I understand. With regard with the two members, would that be two members from each opposition party or two members from the same party?

[*English*]

The Chair: It would be the Conservatives, the Bloc, and then the government—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Very well.

[*English*]

The Chair: —and then back to the NDP. That's the way it would work.

Do you want to try that?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: In this spirit of compromise, I would be willing to try it for the first little bit, but I would like to revisit it after a few presentations to see whether I'm getting my questions through or not. I'd rather not be the afterthought in the question period. I want to make sure that I'm bringing things forward. I am willing to go ahead with this, but I'd like to see us revisit this maybe even a month down the road.

The Chair: I think that's reasonable.

Are we all in favour of alternating responses?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

As I said before, these can be reviewed from time to time. We'll see how they work out in terms of the rhythm we engage our witnesses in, and see if we're satisfied with that.

The next motion reads: that, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses, not exceeding two representatives per organization; and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be at the discretion of the chair.

Is there any discussion? Are you comfortable with that?

(Motion agreed to)

On the distribution of documents with translation: that the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute to the members of the committee documents only when they exist in both official languages.

That's standard operating procedure.

Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I want to move an amendment, which would add the words "and that no document from a witness be distributed without the authorization of the clerk" after the words "both official languages".

[*English*]

The Chair: Just to give some background, if I may, we often did have members of the public coming in and making their deputations with the distribution of their documents just in one language. The clerk usually, in inviting them—much prior to their deputation—tries to encourage them and provides whatever assistance is required to make sure the documents are in both languages. It's not just the documents that come from our civil service and our research but also the documents that are presented. So in fairness to...and not just in fairness, but as a standard operating procedure, we stand to try to have our deputants also provide in both languages.

Mr. Mills.

Mr. Bob Mills: The only problem with that is that it's a bit of a problem for people from some parts of Canada where they couldn't get it translated if they wanted to. If you say they have to do that prior to coming, they really can't testify then, because there's no translation service and so on.

I can think of some of the farmers we have had come to testify on species at risk, for instance. There is no way they would know how to get that translated into French, so they come here. If the clerk can have it translated, that's one thing, but if they have to do it, it's very difficult. I'm sure that in Quebec it's difficult for some of those same people to get it translated into English.

• (0935)

The Chair: Your point is well taken.

I'll ask Eugene to give us his overview in terms of what services they offer.

The Clerk: We offer translation services to anybody. When we speak to our witnesses, we always inform them of the time of questioning and presentation, and we always offer them translation services. In some cases they don't get the document to us in time for us to have it translated, and that's where the problem is. I think that's Mr. Bigras' problem.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: You are answering the question I wanted to ask you.

Whenever you communicate with a witness, you advise him or her that translation services are available. Generally, that works well. The purpose of the amendment is to entrust you with the task of ensuring that the process functions well. With this change, you would be responsible for ensuring that the proposed provisions are complied with.

[*English*]

The Chair: Might I suggest that the clerk invoke whatever services are appropriate to support witnesses in providing their written material in both languages. I'm not sure it takes a formal amendment. Then we'll try to make sure that happens on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Mills, and then I'll go back to Mr. Bigras.

Mr. Bob Mills: Eugene, if someone doesn't get it to you in time, is there any reason they can't give it to you, you get it translated, and it isn't distributed until it's translated? They can still do their presentation, and we get the written material a day later, or whatever.

I don't think that's a big problem. I don't think we've had a serious problem with that before. I think we should move on.

The Clerk: I think what Mr. Bigras is worried about is that witnesses walk into the room and start handing out documents by themselves. He wants me to control that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: It often happens when documents are distributed that the witness goes from one side of the table to the other and distributes them indiscriminately. We have to keep control of document distribution and I think that that is the role of the clerk. In fact, this provision will ensure that the distribution respects all of the established rules. By the same token, the clerk will be protected.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bigras, the clerk has indicated to the chair that he is going to take on that responsibility.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I would like us to vote on the amendment, even though I know that the clerk's good will is a given.

[English]

The Chair: All right, and that the clerk be authorized to control all documents in the room.

Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chairman, I didn't exactly understand the import of the amendment. I just wanted to raise something with the clerk.

[Translation]

Often, people arrive with very long documents. Having the 100, 150, 300 or 400 pages of their presentation translated is very difficult and costly for the committee. Are we talking about bilingual summaries of documents, or about having all of the documentation translated?

Mr. Bernard Bigras: There is an established rule that in such a case, the clerk asks us whether he can distribute the document. After all, we have to be flexible. On several occasions, I agreed that the document be proposed and distributed. I can very well understand that a technical, scientific document cannot be distributed in the second official language.

This procedure prevents the document from being distributed and prevents unintentional breaches of the Official Languages Act. Often, witnesses are not aware that the Official Languages Act applies here. I think it is important that the documents that are to be distributed be brought to the attention of the clerk.

I have a very clear recollection of cases where I was asked to authorize the distribution of scientific, technical documents. I agreed.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: I'm wondering what the question is. Is it relating to reference material or material that is generated by the witness? If it's reference material, you can get that on the web; they give you titles. I'm just curious as to whether it's 150-page reference material or whether it's generated by the witness itself. There is a distinguishing feature between the two.

• (0940)

The Chair: Mr. Jean, I'm going to let the clerk interpret that. It's a good point.

The Clerk: If documents are that size, we usually negotiate with the witnesses and ask if we can get a précis of the document, if they can provide an executive summary, with the translation to be done later because you can't do that overnight, and usually they're agreeable to that. But as far as their presentation goes, which is usually three or four or five pages, we do our best to have it translated, and if not, we just don't pass it around.

We have the simultaneous translation here. They read it in the language they bring it in, the members hear it in their language, and I translate it and send it to members after the fact. I think that has worked okay in the past and there has never been any problem.

The Chair: Perhaps I could bring closure to this. The clerk is pivotal to this, as you can appreciate, and it has worked quite well. Can I suggest that we put Mr. Bigras' amendment and then let the clerk take the appropriate action, and we'll see how it works.

So the wording of the amendment is what?

The Clerk: After the word "languages", you would add "and that the clerk be authorized to control all distribution of documents".

The Chair: You all heard that? The clerk will be authorized to control all distribution of documents.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

Next is the purchasing of documents: that the committee be authorized to purchase documents for the use of the committee. Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

Working meals: that the clerk of the committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide for working meals for the committee and its subcommittees.

Any discussion?

Mr. David McGuinty: As long as the menu is distributed beforehand.

The Chair: Okay.

(Motion agreed to)

Gifts: that the chair be authorized to purchase gifts on behalf of the committee for visiting delegations to Canada meeting with the committee or for foreign hosts when the committee is travelling abroad.

Any discussion? Mr. Mills? No?

(Motion agreed to)

The steering committee will certainly deal with that when it gets to be a larger than normal issue. Eugene is pretty good at that too.

Notice of substantive motions: that except for amendments to bills, *x* hours' notice be given before any substantive motion is considered by the committee, and that the motion be filed with the clerk of the committee and circulated to members in both official languages. Upon receipt of the notice, the clerk shall put the motion on the agenda of the committee's next meeting.

We had 24 hours' notice in our previous procedural orders. Is there any discussion?

Mr. Mills.

Mr. Bob Mills: The only thing I would add is that with unanimous consent we have had it so that you could bring a motion that same day. Sometimes an issue arises and everybody in the committee wants to talk about it, but we have this rule saying you have to give 24 hours' notice. So perhaps we could just have it that with unanimous consent of all parties we could in fact proceed immediately with the motion.

The Chair: The clerk has informed me that this is understood. As long as there's a consensus on that, the inference we draw is that it's understood.

Are you satisfied? You don't need a motion on that? Okay.

Is the 24 hours satisfactory? Okay.

(Motion agreed to)

Subcommittee on agenda and procedure: that the committee create a subcommittee on agenda and procedure composed of the chair, both vice-chairs, the parliamentary secretary, and a representative of each other party.

Is this different, Mr. Clerk, from the steering committee, or is this the steering committee?

The Clerk: This is the steering committee.

The Chair: This is the steering committee. Okay.

I had indicated that it depends on the committee. I know that the public accounts committee had the two vice-chairs and the chair as the steering committee, but the motion here is that the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be composed of the chair, both vice-chairs, the parliamentary secretary, and a representative of each other party. Is there any discussion with respect to that?

• (0945)

The Clerk: In this case it would be “the other party”, just one other party.

The Chair: So in this case it would just be the NDP. Okay, so reflecting what we have today, it would read, “and a representative of the New Democratic Party”, because in the wording, the other parties are represented.

Is there any discussion on that?

(Motion agreed to)

Is there any other business before the chair?

Mr. Richardson.

Mr. Lee Richardson: Mr. Chairman, I would like to add a couple of motions to the routine motions of the standing committee.

The first one is with reference to the main estimates or the supplementary estimates: that whenever the main estimates or supplementary estimates are tabled in the House, the committee invite the minister and any relevant senior officials of the department to appear at the committee.

The second motion is that whenever a chapter of the report of the Auditor General refers to a subject under the mandate of the committee, the committee invite the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and any other relevant senior officials of the department to appear at the committee.

The Chair: We will deal with the first motion: that when the estimates are tabled, the appropriate minister and officials be invited.

(Motion agreed to)

The second motion is when a matter is raised by the Auditor General with respect to, I suppose, issues dealing—

Mr. Lee Richardson: On the subject of the environment.

The Chair: Yes, on the subject to the environment, or related to the environment committee, that the appropriate officials in the Auditor General's office appear before the committee.

The clerk is indicating to me that the Commissioner of the Environment should be included in the motion, but my understanding is that she is under the Auditor General. Notwithstanding that, by the rules of the House her report comes to this committee once a year, so she appears anyway, but this would still activate the appropriate officials coming, regardless of that.

That is just for the information of the committee. There is a commissioner within the Auditor General's office who deals with sustainable development. I believe that is what it is called, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, and she comes annually before the committee to report on matters related to sustainable development.

Mr. Mills.

Mr. Bob Mills: Just so that I understand, in the past, of course, a letter has gone to the clerk each time requesting that this happen. As I understand it now with these motions, this would happen automatically on the clerk's behalf.

The Chair: The clerk is informing me that you are correct.

The Clerk: As a matter of fact, I think the main estimates are before us, and the commissioner is tabling her report next week.

The Chair: Okay. We'll take the motion that with respect to any matters raised that are related to this committee through the Auditor General, officials of her department appear before the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

Is there any other business?

There is just one thing I would like to raise. We have had discussions with some members, and I've sent a note in my handwriting, which the parliamentary secretary was unable to read, with respect—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: It wasn't that I was unable to read your handwriting; I couldn't get it translated into English.

The Chair: I'll work on that, Mr. Parliamentary Secretary.

The issue was with respect to Annex 2001 as it relates to water diversions in the Great Lakes Basin. There are a number of issues associated with it, and I would seek unanimous consent that we ask the parliamentary... I'm not quite sure how to deal with this, but my objective would be to have the committee briefed on the issues that are coming out of the present review of Annex 2001 as it relates to both a qualitative and a quantitative aspect of water diversions in the Great Lakes Basin. My objective is to have the committee briefed on that as soon as possible.

What I would look for from the committee is support in directing the clerk to meet with appropriate staff to set up an opportunity for the committee to be briefed in all matters related to that issue. Do I have unanimous consent to do that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay, then it would be up to the clerk to—

• (0950)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chairman, I will also undertake to talk to officials and with the clerk in order to arrange an update for you.

The Chair: Good. Thank you very much, Mr. Wilfert.

The clerk is advising me.... Mr. Clerk, perhaps we can have a general understanding here that when you have an idea like that, just say "May I bring something to the attention of the committee", so I'm not in a position of forwarding that.

The clerk is suggesting that we do have an open time on Thursday at 9 o'clock. Would the committee want to take that opportunity to meet again to consider agenda items, any other business, not necessarily with a view to passing motions but for a general discussion in terms of the agenda, issues it might want to raise that might be helpful to our research staff and to the clerk, in terms of a road map of where we might like to go?

I notice heads nodding on that. Then the clerk will forward a notice with respect to Thursday morning at 9 o'clock for an hour or so, so we can have an opportunity to get together.

Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. David McGuinty: I have a question. Mr. Chairman, as a newly elected MP, in reviewing the powers of these committees, and it's a question that's perhaps best addressed to the clerk. Has there been in the last several years a joint meeting—and I understand there can be joint committee meetings—between the finance committee and this committee? Is it possible that such a meeting could be convened?

The Chair: Just generally? You're just talking as a general instrument that we might use on a particular issue where there's an overlap?

Mr. David McGuinty: For example, in terms of pre-budget consultations and pre-budget discussions.

The Chair: The answer is that it can be done. Whether it has been done to any extent is another question.

The Clerk: It hasn't been done with this committee, but it's been done with others.

The Chair: May I go to our researcher, and then I'll go to you, Mr. Wilfert.

Mr. Tim Williams (Committee Researcher): The commissioner's report, which is coming out next week, has a chapter on

sustainable development strategies, as per usual. One of the things they have looked at is the financing of SDS and how they're using the tax system to meet environmental goals. There may be an opportunity there, for instance, at least to get the finance department in here, and I'm not sure whether your suggestion to go joint would work for that one, but—

The Chair: We can reflect on that on Thursday too—the instruments we need in terms of what we all perceive as advancing a very broadly based sustainable development agenda.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chair, having obviously been on the finance committee for a number of years, no, we haven't had one. They are obviously engaged...if they have the breadth of witnesses they had last year, which is about 460, I'm sure they will not be able to squeeze us in any time soon. However, I would be interested in the purpose of a joint meeting. I know they are just to the hilt. They always have more witnesses than they need.

I would obviously want more details as to what we'd be looking at. I'd want to know what it is we're asking for, because we're not going to make a submission to them, presumably. Many of those, of course, who are interested in the environmental funding issues go to the committee, but if their schedule is the way it is normally, it's blocked. But I'm sure we could have some discussion on Thursday.

The Chair: I think Mr. McGuinty just wanted to know whether it was possible to have joint meetings with respect to the—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Anything is possible; it's whether it's practical.

The Chair: Okay, but it's not exclusive to just the finance committee. It may be in joint meetings with the industry or transportation committees or with Senate committees. I think the instrument is what Mr. McGuinty is more interested in, and I think we should pursue that further.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I am more than willing to talk to my counterpart as well.

The Chair: Good.

Do I have a motion to adjourn? All in favour?

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

Thank you very much. Have a good day.

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