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Chair

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez

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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.)): Good morning, everybody.

[Translation]

Let's begin.

We are here, once again, to discuss our future business, but in further detail. This is for obvious reasons: Tuesday's meeting was cancelled. Actually, Tuesday morning, the minister cancelled his appearance. Today, there is a cabinet meeting. It is therefore rather difficult to meet with a minister.

However, there are many options on the table. We have more information than last time, because we have looked into the matter.

I just signed the letter to be sent to the Minister for Human Resources and Skills Development regarding the translation of government job offers. If I'm not mistaken, it is the follow-up to Mr. Godin's request. The letter has been signed and will be sent to the minister immediately. You will receive a copy of it.

Second, you recall that when Ms. Adam, the Official Languages Commissioner, appeared during our last meeting, she had to shorten her stay. We have to decide whether we want to meet with her again to discuss the same report or not. I am in the hands of the committee. We will also have other opportunities to invite Ms. Adam, as we will see later on.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Chairman, can you give us an overview of what to expect?

The Chair: Do they have the...

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'd like to revisit that. You referred to Ms. Adam and several other things we should do.

The Chair: I'll read the document and then go into detail as to what we can expect for the future.

We must decide if we want to reinvoke Ms. Adam to discuss the report.

There are the supplementary estimates for the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. We did this exercise last year. Is it mandatory?

The Clerk: No.

The Chair: We'll then have to decide whether we want to meet to discuss the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages' budget.

Mr. Yvon Godin: What is not mandatory? The committee's review?

• (0910)

The Clerk: If we do not report before a given date, it is deemed to have been referred to the House without amendment.

The Chair: If we don't report by a given date, a date which we don't have for the time being, it is deemed to have been returned to the House without amendment. In other words, if we receive it, we can discuss it and suggest amendments.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In the first case, it will be returned without amendment and without recommendations, whereas if it is considered in committee, it will be returned to the House with a recommendation. Is that correct?

The Clerk: No. Because it is a budget, we can only reduce appropriations or reject them. It's the same thing as for the estimates, but this time we're dealing with supplementary estimates.

The Chair: So these are supplementary estimates.

The Clerk: Yes, you have a copy of them.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In that case, we don't need to make a recommendation.

[English]

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): I think it would be our responsibility or our obligation as a committee to look at those estimates and to get some sense of what the intent is. If I understood the clerk correctly, I don't think we can increase, we can only reduce or allow them as is. But rather than just let this pass back to the House by default, I think it would be good for us to—

The Chair: We can invite her on this.

[Translation]

Do all committee members agree?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We had considered inviting someone regarding CBC/Radio-Canada to discuss the corporation's mandate with respect to official language minority communities. We had invited Mr. Lafrance, but he has not yet taken up his duties and won't do so before November 29th. So, he will not be in a position to discuss the strategic action plan before that date.

Would you like to meet with him once he's taken up his duties?

Mr. D'Amours, you have the floor.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I think it would be appropriate to meet with him. We could give him a few days to prepare. We wouldn't want our questions to remain unanswered because he hasn't had the time to assess the work.

Given CBC/Radio-Canada's situation in regions where there are official language minority communities and in rural regions, it would be important to hear from corporation representatives at the official languages committee, so they can discuss the issues with us and if need be, provide us with the answers we need.

The Chair: We had discussed inviting Mr. Lafrance and Mr. Rabinovitch. Because Mr. Rabinovitch is in office, he could be invited, and I think it would be preferable to have Mr. Lafrance as well. So, it wouldn't be before November 29th.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I wanted to talk about the president. At first, we wanted to invite Mr. Rabinovitch, who is accountable for what is going on CBC/Radio-Canada. Mr. Lafrance would only be a guest. We would simply like to know his new philosophy or what he will...

The Chair: He is the head of francophone services for CBC/Radio-Canada.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It's shameful. Take the example of a 150-year-old family-run company in my riding. It was founded before Confederation. Last Friday, there was an event held from 5 to 7 p.m. It was in the Acadian peninsula; TVA was there, but Radio-Canada wasn't. The next evening, there was another major event with Commerce'or. The Carrefour de la mer was full, there was a tribute to a gentleman who had belonged to the Chamber of Commerce for 50 years. It was a typical community event. TVA was there, but Radio-Canada wasn't. Radio-Canada representatives claim to want to compete with TVA and others, but I don't believe it. They don't care about the regions anymore. Radio-Canada is forgetting about us. We'll have to address this type of thing. We'll have to give him a good sturdy chair so he doesn't fall over.

The Chair: I think, Mr. Godin, that committee members agree that it is important we hear from Mr. Rabinovitch, and by extension, Radio-Canada. Moreover, I believe it would be preferable to invite Mr. Lafrance as well, who is responsible for francophone programming as a whole. It is up to you to decide.

Mr. Yvon Godin: To follow up on that, we should also look into legislation. Under the current act, Radio-Canada is free to determine its programming and do whatever it likes. We could find the provision in the act that sets out this freedom. Parliament may have to make some changes and give the corporation a more solid mandate, as well as specify its regional mandate. We can no longer simply focus on Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

The Chair: Very well. We can look into that issue. I think we all agree on it.

Mr. Simard, you have the floor.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): If I'm not mistaken, Mr. Lafrance is currently preparing his action plan and his business plan for francophone communities outside of Quebec and the francophonie in general. I think having Mr. Rabinovitch alone would be a mistake. I recommend waiting until Mr. Lafrance can

accompany him. Perhaps it wouldn't be a bad thing to have him here, as a freshly appointed new director. Perhaps we may influence him.

• (0915)

The Chair: Do we agree on inviting them in early December? Would you agree to that? Is early December fine with everyone?

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): He won't have much experience.

The Chair: He's currently working on that, although he has not yet assumed office.

Ms. Brunelle, you have the floor.

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Could we discuss the CBC budget?

The Chair: That comes under Canadian Heritage.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: So it's more of a question for Canadian Heritage. Still, significant amounts go to ensuring that the CBC broadcasts all across Canada in order to carry out its mandate.

The Chair: I think we can discuss it, but there's no direct connection. I sat on the Canadian Heritage committee for a time, and this issue really comes under that committee. We can certainly discuss it.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I was really surprised, when I was out west, to see that TVA, which gets no public funding, was covering francophone communities in western Canada. That's quite surprising. It raises questions.

The Chair: That could certainly be discussed.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Would it be useful to hear Mr. Rabinovitch first, in order to identify the problems?

The Chair: We can do that, but that would mean two meetings largely dealing with the same thing.

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): We might need more than two meetings with the CBC representatives. It's been going on for 20 years, it's not new.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: If the problems are identified, the president could perhaps undertake to deal with them in his report or action plan.

The Chair: All suggestions are considered.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I don't know if that would be worthwhile. The action plan will be ready when he appears. I'd like an update on the action plan. If we discuss the problems with Mr. Rabinovitch...

The Chair: There's a number of issues that all parties have to discuss here. Of course, the CBC is a priority. Personally, I thought that by dealing with both of these issues, we would be maximizing the efficiency of the meeting, which doesn't mean we couldn't hold another.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: It's because of the timing.

The Chair: It's up to you.

Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In my opinion, we have to start with Mr. Rabinovitch, to get his version. Obviously, he is going to say there isn't enough money. He has already said that, as a matter of fact.

Then, we should hear from the minister responsible for the act. In the Broadcasting Act, 1991, chapter 11, in the "Objects and Powers" section of part III, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, it says:

46(5) The Corporation shall, in the pursuit of its objects and in the exercise of its powers, enjoy freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence.

That should be dealt with. Mr. Rabinovitch uses that to justify the fact that they make the programming decisions. So we have no say on that, and as our colleague just said, that's the way it has been for 20 years. I think we need to follow through on that.

The Chair: Mr. Godbout.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Personally, I have no problem with having to wait until early December, since it has been that way for 20 years. Two weeks either way aren't going to make a difference. However, we shouldn't wait any longer.

I'd like to hear another agency on this: the CRTC.

The Chair: We can come back to other additions later. For the time being, we are only talking about the CBC.

• (0920)

Mr. Marc Godbout: It's not an addition. The CRTC dictates what the CBC has to include in its programming in order to have its licence renewed. The CRTC is the watchdog. That's what they said the last time they appeared, and they acted as a result. It's directly connected, Mr. Chairman. It's not another topic.

The Chair: It means another meeting.

Mr. Yvon Godin: In light of what Mr. Godbout was saying, I would like our researchers to draw up for us the chronological order in which these people should appear. I agree that we should have the CRTC, but do we have to have the CRTC before we meet those responsible for the administration of the act? The CRTC isn't in charge, the department is. After that, we could figure out how to proceed and understand what's going on. The CRTC might tell us that the act prevents it from doing one thing or another. I would like something done about this.

The Chair: I would just like to remind you that the House will be in recess next week. So there won't be any meetings.

We could travel the week of November 21st. That's what the committee had decided and submitted to our respective parties. So, next week, we won't be here, and the week of the 21st we might not be here either. Anyway, we can't schedule a meeting that week because it is reserved for travel. That brings us to early December. There are only two weeks left in our planning, before early December.

Mr. Marion Ménard (Committee Researcher): Mr. Godin, I'm going to read you a quote from the Broadcasting Act that has to do with the question you just asked me. It's in a document I sent to all of the committee members; I prepared it at the time of the CBC/Radio-Canada lockout. At the time, committee members were hoping that the corporation would appear as a witness to discuss the issue.

I'm going to read you subparagraph 3(1)(m)(iv) of the Broadcasting Act.

(m) the programming provided by the Corporation should

(iv) be in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities,

The CBC obligations you are discussing are indeed in the Broadcasting Act.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That doesn't change the fact that there's the Société Radio-Canada for Montreal and the CBC for the rest of the country.

We are talking about regions. The SRC apparently no longer has any presence there. No wonder no one in Acadia listens to the SRC in Moncton; from 9 o'clock to 11 o'clock or noon, they only talk about Quebec. They don't talk about Moncton, they don't talk about Caraquet. So people prefer to listen to another station in the region.

Mr. Marion Ménard: If I understand correctly, you want my research to focus more on regional dynamics, i.e., whether Radio-Canada...

Mr. Yvon Godin: Of course. Public television and radio in Canada are not just for two cities. It's not Radio-Montréal or Radio-Toronto, it's Radio-Canada. People in my riding want to hear regional issues discussed.

The Chair: You have asked the researcher to do some research on that. I'd just like to remind you that the committee won't be meeting until two weeks from now. So, if we go ahead with your request, we will again be postponing our invitation to representatives of the CBC to appear before us.

Couldn't we invite one witness, to begin with, so that the clerk can get the ball rolling and so we can hear some witnesses on this? As for deciding precisely how we are going to proceed, we can do that at the appropriate time. We could invite one witness, even if it means having the other appear a couple of days before or after...

Mr. Yvon Godin: All I'm saying is that we have to start dealing with the CBC problem. We're not going to be able to cover it off in one day. First we will hear from the president and whatever witnesses we invite. The topics will go in order, i.e., how does the act protect us, what obligations does it impose on the CBC, what is the mandate of the CBC, and so on. We can invite whatever witnesses we need, and then submit a report and table it in Parliament.

The Chair: Mr. Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that one way or another, that brings us to early December. I recommend that we meet Mr. Rabinovitch and Mr. Lafrance together. If we find subsequently that a second meeting is necessary, we can invite them back. It seems to me that it would be appropriate to meet them together, so that Mr. Rabinovitch hears Mr. Lafrance discuss his plans. If a second meeting is required, whether it's just with Mr. Rabinovitch or with Mr. Lafrance, we can ask them to come back. That's my recommendation.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Something has been bothering me for a number of years. Previously, in Trois-Rivières, CBC shows were produced locally. For some years now, that's no longer the case. So we have suffered job losses and we have practically no shows left.

Is that a CBC philosophy? Can we find out if that's happening everywhere? For our part, our concern is to retain a few employees and keep a regional newscast, but also to have other shows. There was a time when we had televised debates during election campaigns, for example. We're talking about a certain democratic deficit, and job loss. I'd like more details on this.

• (0925)

Mr. Marion Ménard: I have here the CBC's licence conditions as set out by the CRTC in 2000. There are clearly some regional production obligations. However, I couldn't specify, off the top of my head, how many hours that entails. I can, however, easily get the answer.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: It would be interesting to see whether the CBC is meeting that obligation.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC)): Any other comments?

Mr. Marc Godbout: I would like the appearance of the people from the CBC to be immediately followed by the appearance of the representatives of the CRTC.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): Is that the will of the committee?

Some voices: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): So there's a consensus. We will now move to the next topic, the government's response to the committee's report on bilingualism in the public service. All committee members have received a copy. Has anyone had a chance to read it? Not yet? We haven't decided yet when to discuss it. Is that something the committee wishes to do? Do committee members wish to discuss it at the next meeting?

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I discussed this with my colleague who was on this committee before me. He couldn't tell me whether it had to do with questions raised by the committee and responses from the government. Is that what it is actually about? Were these questions raised a long time ago?

Mr. Marion Ménard: It was in May 2005...

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Is the usual procedure for us to study the responses and raise further questions if there's something wrong? How exactly does it work?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): I think we discuss it in order to determine whether the report accurately reflects our committee's findings. Is that right?

Hon. Raymond Simard: Yes, Mr. Chairman. If we aren't satisfied with the government's responses, we can still make comments or write letters. In my opinion, it's important to make sure we are satisfied with it.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Could some of the subjects addressed in the document be incorporated into our committee's future business? It could be problems with bilingualism in the public service or other issues that are bothering us and that are consistent with the commissioner's report.

• (0930)

Hon. Raymond Simard: It is up to the committee to decide.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Okay. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): The report is the result of our work. We debated these issues for about three months. The conclusions are ones we arrived at. Correct me if I am wrong, but I think that we are going to see if the report actually reflects what we wanted to say. We are going to consider the matter at the next meeting.

Is that correct?

Hon. Raymond Simard: We make recommendations to the government, and the government must respond within a set period of time. We then take a look at the response. Often, we are not satisfied with it. If that is the case, we can inform the government. It is really up to the committee to decide what it wants to do with the response.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If, after having read the report, we are not satisfied, we can bring the minister back so that he can provide us with some explanations. We can then question him on the points where we do not agree. That is the way we normally proceed.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): That is correct.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I suggest that we familiarize ourselves with the report, and that at a future meeting, we decide whether inviting the minister to appear before the committee is advisable or not.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): Will we devote the entire meeting or just part of the meeting to that?

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Since there are several recommendations, we should devote the entire meeting to it. Must I say "Mr. Chairman" when I speak to you? It is truly an honour.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): That is clearly what is appropriate.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): So will we devote the entire meeting or just part of the meeting to that discussion? I do not think that the committee has spoken to that.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Have we completed the list of subjects to address? I noted the following ones: inviting Ms. Adam back, meeting with the people from CBC, and considering the government response that we have before us.

Was there anything else?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): We have not yet made a decision about the Commissioner of Official Languages' annual report. That is another matter.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: We decided to bring Ms. Adam back, did we not?

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Nothing has been said about that.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I thought we had agreed on that. The meeting would be on her budget and the remainder of her report.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): I do not know if it will be possible to bring back Ms. Adam at the next meeting in addition to discussing the government response to the committee report on bilingualism. We should make a decision on that. I think that the government response to the report is quite an important and complex issue. Perhaps we should devote all of our energy to it. At any rate, I am in the committee's hands.

Mr. D'Amours?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the committee wants her to appear, that is one thing. However, in my opinion, if we truly want to focus our attention on the government's response, it would perhaps be better not to limit ourselves, in other words not to invite a witness and make the witness wait and end up having to set another date for a meeting in order to continue our work.

We do not want to put anything else on the agenda for the next meeting in addition to considering the government response, unless we had something a little lighter and less technical.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: I agree. We will need a lot of time to discuss the 13 recommendations. In fact, we could spend the whole meeting discussing that topic.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): Fine. Two members said that we should take the whole meeting for this. Is there consent to spend the whole meeting on the government's response?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): Should the meeting be in camera?

Some hon. members: No.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): No. Fine.

Shall we now come back to the Official Languages Commissioner's annual report? We haven't made a decision on that yet.

• (0935)

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would simply like to make a suggestion. I have some serious problems with this. Perhaps we don't yet have a consensus on when we will meet, but I think we need to do this as quickly as possible.

I would like us to meet with the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development in order to discuss the translation of job offers in Canada. This has become a serious problem. Francophones in Canada attempting to apprise themselves of job offers open to the public frequently cannot read them because they aren't translated. The department says that it will continue to use translation software. That doesn't make any sense. They're breaking the law.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): I also use it so I understand the problem.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's why so few francophones voted for you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): Thank you, that was nice of you.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Chairman, on the matter of the commissioner and her report, I am open to anything. If the members feel that we should discuss this then we can do that. I have no objection to that.

However, the commissioner came before this committee for one hour and we have also held consultations. They lasted three or four hours. We truly heard the communities affected by the Action Plan for Official Languages. Personally, I am satisfied with the information we have received. However, if the members want her to come back, that is her job, that is what she is here for.

In my opinion, at this stage we should be changing the subject and moving on to something else. There are other important subjects such as the CBC. We should be focusing on something else. As I said earlier though, if the members want to meet with her again, then I agree.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I agree with Mr. Simard, but I would rather we speak about translation. That is the purpose of official languages. We are the Standing Committee on Official Languages. There is a community that is currently receiving no translation.

Mr. Brison, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, resolved the issue immediately. I have not received any other complaints. He removed the software; it's as simple as that. However the people from the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development say that they will continue to use the software. I feel that is not fair.

We do not need to have a two-hour meeting in order to question witnesses and get answers to our questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Pierre Poilievre): The committee had decided to send a letter to the minister to inform her of the problem. The chair of the committee signed that letter today and will send it this morning or this afternoon. That is our first step. I think we should wait for an answer.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's true. I had forgotten that.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I don't know how much work this would require in terms of research. I didn't have time to read the commissioner's report because of my involvement in Bill S-3. However I do remember that 90 per cent of complaints dealt with the language spoken by civil servants.

I looked over the committee's recommendations as well as the responses and I noted that this issue was also raised. So the problem regarding the use of French in the public service has also been raised there. Is there overlap between the major problems noted by the official languages commissioner, that is those giving rise to the greatest number of complaints, and the committee's concerns? Could we look at this issue together? We'll be starting with the government's responses.

Rather than hear Ms. Adam, perhaps we should find out where there are problems and whether or not our concerns are justified? If so, then it might be appropriate to continue to apply some pressure.

Mr. Marion Ménard: Obviously the committee's report raised several issues, including the bilingualism bonus, language of work and the exclusion approval order. Whether you are satisfied or not with the government's responses, we could still focus on certain issues.

In terms of language of work, about a year or a year and a half ago, the official languages commissioner published a rather extensive study on the matter. Mr. Finn can probably confirm that. Evidently there are problems in that area.

• (0940)

Ms. Paule Brunelle: That would give us an opportunity to determine where the serious or chronic problems lie.

The Chair: I'm sorry, I missed some of the discussion.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: You missed the best part because I was the one speaking.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Could the clerk please tell me where we were?

The Clerk: You were discussing the government's response. The committee members decided to spend all of the next meeting on that issue. They are still somewhat divided on the matter of the commissioner's annual report. You were discussing that last point.

The Chair: On the matter of the next point, that is, the appointment of judges, Mr. Simard suggested inviting someone to appear before the committee. The committee met one witness and sent a copy of that individual's testimony to Mr. Simard so that he could decide whether or not he wanted to hear that witness again.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Chairman, this is quite a complex issue. The researcher reminded me that Minister Cotler had already appeared before this committee to discuss that issue. The discussion included the structuring of committees in the provinces. However, we never reported on this matter. We heard a witness and then, for one reason or another, we moved on to another topic.

Be that as it may, given what is happening with the appointment of judges, that is the establishment of new procedures, the committee's right of review, and so on, it might be appropriate to put this subject back on the agenda. We'll have to see what everyone wants.

For example, in Manitoba it is, for all intents and purposes, impossible to have a trial in French. Only one of the 41 judges is bilingual, so what do people do? They wait, or if they've had enough, they request a trial in English. That is absolutely unacceptable. The answer that we got from the group... What was their name?

Mr. Marion Ménard: The Fédération des associations de juristes d'expression française de common law.

Hon. Raymond Simard: No, it was another group, the judges' group.

Mr. Marion Ménard: The Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs.

Hon. Raymond Simard: They are supposed to be familiar with the situation of judges in this country, that is, how many judges are bilingual, how one determines if they are truly bilingual or not, and so on. Their answers were absolutely unacceptable.

This would be a short study that would maybe require two, three or four meetings. We could produce a report. Perhaps that would contribute to the new process for appointing judges.

The Chair: A subcommittee will be tabling a report on the appointment of judges in December. We could wait for that report and then put this subject on the agenda. We have a long list of potential topics. Furthermore, December is next month. It might seem far away but Christmas is coming!

Here is what may be an excellent suggestion. For now, the committee could write to the subcommittee and ask them to take this issue into account.

Hon. Raymond Simard: The purpose being to ensure that it would be included in their recommendations. That is a very good idea, because after the recommendations it will be too late.

The Chair: Do you agree with that?

Hon. Raymond Simard: Yes.

The Chair: Good. We could start by writing...

Mr. Godin, you wish to speak.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We have already considered this issue. Perhaps our researcher could use what we have already heard and send that to the subcommittee along with the Standing Committee on Official Languages' concerns.

The Chair: That is an excellent idea.

Mr. Vellacott, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: This is with respect to the upcoming Supreme Court appointment—is that what we're talking about right now?

• (0945)

The Chair: Not about the Supreme Court, no.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: We're not asking for input on that at this point?

The Chair: No.

Do you know somebody?

[Translation]

We invited Sport Canada officials, on Ms. Brunelle's suggestion. The minister was invited.

[English]

We have invited Mr. Owen. He has accepted. He was confirmed for November 15, but he had to cancel for that date.

Do we have another date for Mr. Owen?

[Translation]

The Clerk: He suggested the 29th of November.

The Chair: He is here the 29th of November.

Is it your wish to change that date if CBC officials are available?

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Lafrance will not be available, he starts on the 29th of November.

The Chair: No, Mr. Lafrance will not be available.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: In that case, it would be a good idea to hear Mr. Owen.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Chairman, if a minister says he can come, I would suggest we not move him because then we might have problems.

The Chair: Right.

Are you in agreement to invite him? Mr. Owen is being invited. Fine.

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Perhaps I should raise this later, but as we are talking about this, I would just like to point out that it's not easy to have ministers appear. The cabinet meets Thursday morning, at the same time our committee meets. Every time we want to hear a minister, it's not possible.

When we're making up the schedule and we know we want to invite a minister, perhaps we should consider meeting Wednesday afternoon. Of course that depends on everyone else's schedule.

I remember that during the previous legislature, we were meeting Wednesday afternoons for that very reason. When we discussed Thursdays, it was pointed out that the cabinet met...

Hon. Raymond Simard: ...on Thursday morning.

Mr. Yvon Godin: ...on Thursday morning.

The Chair: As you know, the whips are the ones who set the committees' schedules. We inherited Thursdays.

Mr. Yvon Godin: No, we are masters of our own fate. If a room is available then we won't be inconveniencing anyone. We have the authority to change our meeting times.

The Chair: Are you talking about the committee?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes.

The Chair: That's true, but generally speaking, the schedule has already been determined, has it not?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, generally speaking the schedule has already been decided. However, if, for example, we want to meet with the minister one week or the following week, and that minister is not available on Thursday, then we can do it on Wednesday if our members are available and wish to do so.

I don't want to go against the will of the committee. If we are available Wednesday afternoon, and if the minister also is, then those kinds of changes are possible.

The Chair: I do not have a problem with that.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Aren't the rooms available Tuesday morning?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Tuesday is also available.

The Chair: Yes. However, there is a problem if we choose Tuesdays and Thursdays: every second week, this would be impossible right from the start. We only have one window of opportunity. Our two meetings have already been scheduled, and most of the interveners are not ministers. Thus, in exceptional cases, we could consider Wednesdays if need be.

Let us now deal with the issue of performance and official languages in the embassies. We said that the performance of the embassies had to be studied by inviting the assistant deputy minister in charge of human resources and official languages for Foreign Affairs. He is currently travelling and will be back on November 9. We will put his name on the schedule as soon as he gets back. This was a request made by Mr. Godbout.

Let us go on to linguistic duality in the management boards of crown corporations. This was also requested by Mr. Godbout. We asked Mr. Ménard to do some preliminary research, but he focused on Mr. Bélanger's presentation, and on reading and analyzing the

mid-term report of the Action Plan for Official Languages. Today, we chose to receive Mr. Owen, Minister of State for Sports.

Regarding official languages performance in the Department of National Defence, we invited Mr. Bill Graham. There is an interesting side to this. The official languages commissioner, Ms. Adam, is doing a linguistic audit of this department. She will publish her report next December 6. We could hear the commissioner on December 8 or 13. She will carry out an in-depth investigation of the Department of National Defence. We could hear her right afterwards. It would be really interesting. Could we agree on December 8? Very well. Afterward, we could invite Minister Graham to hear his reaction to this report.

Regarding the mid-term report for the Action Plan for Official Languages, Mr. Bélanger, who had accepted to be here on Tuesday morning, had to cancel his appearance. We will have to invite him again. We will invite him as soon as he is available.

The report of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada will be tabled by early December. That might be an opportune time to invite the President of Treasury Board. As the clerk says, the committee usually invites him.

● (0950)

Mr. Marion Ménard: This is part of the committee's legal mandate.

The Chair: This is more than a custom. We must invite the President of Treasury Board. We will carry out the committee's mandate.

Mr. Clerk, your mandate is to fill in the coming weeks, without touching the week of November 21 for the time being, because we do not know what to expect.

We have decided that if we travel, it will be on the 21st. We have done our part and now it is up to the various parties to get to work on it together with the whips and House leaders.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The House leaders have agreed.

The Chair: The House leaders have agreed; we have yet to hear from the whips.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The House leaders agreed to this during the meeting between the leaders and the whips.

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, could you come back to us on this? We will need the confirmation of all the parties.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Lauzon, trust me, I give you my word.

The Chair: There is one more point to verify. I asked you this question at the beginning of the meeting, and we said that we would wait before making a decision. Would you like to have Ms. Adam come back to speak about her annual report, because we cut her presentation short?

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I would rather not do this right away. As I requested, we will see whether the research shows convergence between the committee's recommendations and Ms. Adam's report. I suggest, rather, that she be questioned about specific points.

The Chair: All right. That suits me.

[English]

Is that okay for everybody?

The subject of the next meeting is the response of the government to our report.

[*Translation*]

Have you all received it?

May I ask you to read it attentively, please. That will improve the efficiency of the committee's work.

Is there anything else?

Mr. Godbout.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Maybe you already mentioned it, but when are we expecting to deal with the issue of appointments to government agencies?

The Chair: I raised this matter just a while ago.

We decided that Mr. Ménard would do some research on this matter. Because he was busy with Mr. Bélanger's presentation, he will come back to us on this later. Then we could set a schedule accordingly.

[*English*]

Is there anything else, *chers amis*? No?

Donc, have a nice week, and I'll see you about ten days from now.

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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