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—
Chair

Mr. Leon Benoit

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•(0910)

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Normand Radford): Honourable members, I see a quorum.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. I'm ready to receive motions to that effect.

[*Translation*]

You have the floor, Mr. Menzies.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Menzies (MacLeod, CPC): I would like to nominate Leon Benoit as chair of this committee.

The Clerk: Mr. Menzies moves that Leon Benoit take the chair of this committee.

Are there any other motions?

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Surprisingly, I'd like to second that nomination. I think Mr. Benoit did a good job this summer, so I would like to second the nomination.

The Clerk: Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

[*Translation*]

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

The Clerk: I declare Mr. Benoit chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: The Standing Orders require that I proceed to the election of the vice-chairs.

There are two vice-chair positions. The first vice-chair is from the official opposition. Do I have a motion to that effect?

Mr. Cannan.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Thank you.

I'd like to nominate Lui Temelkovski as the vice-chair.

The Clerk: Mr. Cannan moves that Mr. Lui Temelkovski become the vice-chair from the official opposition.

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

(Motion agreed to)

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: The second vice-chair position is a member from the other opposition.

[*Translation*]

Are there any motions to that effect?

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): I move that Mr. Serge Cardin be elected second vice-chair.

The Clerk: Mr. André moves that Mr. Serge Cardin be elected second vice-chair. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I hereby declare Mr. Cardin elected second vice-chair.

[*English*]

Monsieur Benoit, may I invite you to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. I'd like to first of all thank you for your support for the chair and congratulate the vice-chairs.

We have a new member of the committee.

I'd just like to welcome you here, Serge. It's very good to see you here; I'm looking forward to working with you.

The rest of the members are the same, I think, so that's good.

I don't really think we have anything else to deal with here today as far as I know, other than if we could just have a meeting on Thursday to discuss future business. We could do that one of two ways. We could have a full committee first to discuss ideas for future business and then have the subcommittee finalize it, or we could have a subcommittee meeting to deal with future business. We can go either way. If we could have it at the allotted time on Thursday, that would probably be the best way to deal with it.

Mr. Julian, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Perhaps Mr. André will agree with me.

[*English*]

We already do have an item of future business, and that is the softwood hearings that we've scheduled for Saguenay, Thunder Bay, and Vancouver, the motion that we adopted in August. That really is the first item of business. We know the bill is coming forward. If it passes second reading, it would come to this committee and we could presumably mesh the work of the bill and the hearings.

The Chair: Yes.

● (0915)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André: I believe Peter Julian and I are on the same page. I think we could move immediately to consider future business, which will include among other things softwood lumber and Peter's motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: There is an issue of relevancy, but I'll allow the committee to talk about that. The agreement has been signed, and the implementation date is already known. We do have enacting legislation coming before the House. It seems to me that it's not a relevant motion any more, but it's up to the committee.

Mr. Cannan, go ahead, please.

Mr. Ron Cannan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As a newbie to the committee, I would just like to clarify something. Is there a process that has to take place between the time the motion comes to the committee and the point where the House leaders have to discuss it, as far as travel goes?

The Chair: For travel to happen, it has to be discussed by the liaison committee.

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Our House leader hasn't agreed.

The Chair: It would have to be approved there. That's the next step in the process. If the committee wants me to take this to the liaison committee on its behalf, of course I'll do that. It's entirely up to you.

To tell you the truth, I'm kind of surprised that this issue is being brought here, because it doesn't seem relevant any more. However, if we are going to look at a motion to travel, if we're going to follow through on that, Mr. Julian, we'd certainly need enough information about exactly what we are looking at doing here, to take to the liaison committee. That would be the first thing.

So if you want to lay that out, we'll have some discussion on that.

I see Ms. Guergis. Go ahead, please.

Ms. Helena Guergis: Thanks very much.

I think that with the legislation now in the House, we should be changing gears. It's passed. We should be looking to the future and having a conversation on what the future of this agreement is going to look like in terms of the makeup of the binational council, and Canada's role in the meritorious issues. There are various other committees. In fact, even going through other briefings, I'm learning that there are other things in which we, as a committee, can play a very important role concerning the next steps for this agreement, and the steps to come even in seven to nine years.

I was hoping that maybe we could have some ministry officials actually come before us and give us a bit of an outline of where they're headed, and give us some advice about what we should be looking at. I'm also looking to our researchers. Perhaps in the past there's been a binational council of some other sort. Maybe they could give us some advice about its makeup and what their role was, so that we can decide what we think and give some advice to the

government on that. I don't really think we should be travelling right now to talk about the past and what we've discussed in the past.

I think that our House leader does not agree with our travelling. It's my understanding that House leaders do all have to agree in order for our committee to travel. If I am wrong, someone can correct me, but I'm not in favour of travelling. I think the legislation is here, and we need to move forward and talk about the next steps in every way we can. I've also spoken with the minister and he's happy to come before us again as well. So maybe we could schedule the civil service to come to the next meeting to give us next steps and some advice. Maybe we could schedule some time for the researchers to give us some advice, in a work plan, in an outline of what they see as next steps when they look at it. Then maybe we could also have the minister come in and we can ask him some questions about the information and advice that have been given to us by the researchers and the civil service.

The Chair: Okay. Let's have a bit more discussion on this and then, Peter and Guy, if you want to go ahead with this then we will need the information. We need to know meeting dates. We need to know witnesses, or at least suggested witnesses, and all of that kind of thing. So let's have a little more discussion before you let the committee know what you want to do with this.

Could we have Mr. Eyking and then Mr. Maloney?

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're not exactly happy with the deal, as has been made well known in the House over the last few days, but that being said there was a considerable amount of time spent on this, and I have to commend all my colleagues for the time they spent on this over the summer. We had a lot of witnesses.

There is a time, though, when we have to move on. There are many issues on trade that we have to be following as a committee, and we also have to recognize the amount of moneys that are available for travel. Ms. Guergis, regarding travelling, we might have to look at travelling to Asia. We might have to look at many things as a committee, especially when we're dealing with bilaterals.

Anyway, at the end of the day my point is this. We have to move on. We have many other important things to deal with concerning trade, and we have to watch how we're spending our money when we're dealing with travel.

● (0920)

Mr. John Maloney (Welland, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Chair, I supported the motion last summer. Unfortunately, the dynamics have changed. We have had the vote in the House. I would agree with the sentiments of the two previous speakers that I think it's time to move on.

The Chair: You've heard the way the committee is going on this, gentlemen. Ms. Guergis has a comment. Then you can decide whether you want to go ahead with this or not.

Go ahead.

Ms. Helena Guergis: Thanks very much.

Further to Mr. Eyking's comments, I believe the committee did agree that we would, perhaps, set one of our meetings aside every week to talk about the North American strategy and competitiveness, which would include some bilateral conversations, as well. If we could agree that one meeting a week is focused on that—I believe the researchers may have worked up a work plan for us—we can talk about that at one point. But I'm sure that we might want to talk about a couple of free trade agreements.

The Chair: This is getting into future business other than the motion that's before us. Could we bring that up a little later?

Yes, Mr. André.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Chairman, my motion in essence called for us to consider future business, not necessarily to go ahead with Mr. Julian's motion. I think the committee should examine the softwood lumber bill. Therefore, I agree with my colleagues. We should settle this matter today to avoid having to sit on Thursday merely to deal with future business. That's where I was going with my motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Sorry, I didn't catch that for sure. I'm not sure whether it was the translation or whether I wasn't listening carefully enough. Did you say you would prefer to deal with future business on Thursday?

Mr. Guy André: No, no, today. That was my proposition.

The Chair: Today? I don't know whether people are prepared today. Okay, we'll certainly go there.

Mr. Julian, you suggested that we go ahead with the travel that was agreed to earlier. Do you want to comment on that?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, this committee has adopted a motion. That is what was adopted by the committee. The direction we've given to you as chair, and to the clerk, is to arrange those hearings.

We have a bill that will be coming forward, presumably, if it passes second reading, and it will involve hearings in any event. So we're not talking about past business, we're talking about current business. We need to know what the impact is in the Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay region, in northern Quebec, which is Pierre Paquette's motion. We need to know what the impact is in northwestern Ontario, which was Mr. Boshcoff's motion. We need to know what the impact is in British Columbia.

It's very pertinent, it's very relevant, and I think the residents of those areas have already expressed real interest in these hearings. If this committee adopts a motion that cancels those hearings, I think folks in those regions would like to hear about it. We have a motion—it was adopted—that directs the chair and the clerk to structure those hearings. We also have work that would be coming forward that meshes very well with the hearings.

So I would suggest that we just continue, given that we have the motion and given that we have adopted this attempt to go to those three regions, and we proceed to mesh the hearings on the second reading of Bill C-24, at the committee stage—assuming it passes second reading—with hearings in the region. Rather than having folks, the few wealthy, come to Ottawa to express their points of

view, we go to the regions. That's what we should be doing as parliamentarians to hear firsthand what the impact of Bill C-24 will be in those regions.

The Chair: Mr. Julian, you're a very creative MP, but there a couple of things.

First of all, if we're going to discuss how to handle the meetings on the legislation, that's one thing. But taking a motion from the past and all of a sudden making that motion apply to our committee meetings on the implementation legislation for the trade deal is a different thing. You can't do that.

• (0925)

Mr. Peter Julian: I disagree.

The Chair: You would have to have another motion come to committee. What has to happen is that there has to be a motion from the committee to take any proposal for travel to the liaison committee for approval. That means that the House leaders have to approve. It doesn't sound like that's going to happen.

If you want me to, and if the committee wants me to, I will take it to the liaison committee. The House leaders can have that discussion, and we'll—

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, that is what happens in committees. When we direct you—as we have—that is implicit. I understand the change in clerk, but normally we would already have a budget and you would have already done the follow-up. I understand that may have been delayed because of the change in clerk, but the direction was very clear.

The Chair: You need to have a liaison committee meeting, and we haven't had one yet. I've been told that the next meeting of the liaison committee will be on September 28 or 29.

The Clerk: What you have is a motion requesting or ordering the chair to present a budget proposal to the liaison committee. That's the first point. It is not to make the arrangements, as you pointed out, Mr. Julian, which is a fair comment; it's really to seek permission to travel.

The second step, if the liaison committee approves, is for the House leaders to give permission to travel. A prerequisite for any motion to travel is dates. If you don't have dates, it's difficult to determine when you'll travel.

If you want to travel on the softwood lumber legislation, Bill C-24, it is in front of the House at the moment. As you pointed out, if it comes to committee.... I know there's an amendment and a subamendment in the House at the moment, so it is difficult to do a budget and a proposal for travel, because there are no dates.

I don't want to prejudge the liaison committee, but from my experience I would be surprised that they would approve a budget based on hypothetical travel, because you don't have the dates. It's a bit of a conundrum.

The Chair: Mr. Julian, where shall we go from here?

This committee certainly has every right to reverse the motion before us. I've had a call to put to a vote whether we carry forward on this.

Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would argue that we are talking about two completely different discussions here. The motion that was put forward and carried at the previous meeting was discussing the potential softwood lumber agreement.

If we decided to travel now it would be to have discussions on Bill C-24. We would need a completely different motion from this committee...two totally different discussions.

The Chair: That's what I'm arguing too. Mr. Julian is making the point that the committee agreed to take this travel to the liaison committee. Of course, we haven't had a meeting of the liaison committee since that time. But to me it doesn't seem to make any sense to do that.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: The solution is very simple. We can have an all-party agreement to complete the debate on second reading by a certain date. We'll then have dates to propose to the liaison committee. That's not a difficult thing to do.

If the liaison committee is meeting on Thursday afternoon, I believe we could have an agreement in place by Thursday morning, the next date of the international trade committee. So the issue of dates is easily resolved, and we could resolve it by Thursday morning.

• (0930)

The Chair: Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: I would defer back to my honourable colleague Mr. Eyking, who made a great deal of sense when he talked about the importance of all the other trade issues that we have to discuss, that are very important to this committee and very important to Canadians. We have a piece of legislation in place at a certain level; we need to talk about this binational panel that we've never formulated before. This is a panel that we don't have a template to put together, so we need to have a discussion around here. We need to bring in advisers to tell us how to put this panel together, who should sit on it, who will choose this panel. We have some very important discussions right here at this table, rather than travelling across this country to talk about a deal that's already done and bringing into one day a week where the future of this country goes on other trade issues.

The Chair: Let's bring this to conclusion. We can't do it with a motion to follow through on something the committee already agreed to, so is somebody willing to bring a motion to the table that we cancel the initial motion, because it doesn't seem particularly relevant any more, and that we get on to dealing with the other business of the committee, something to that effect, that we don't go ahead with the travel agreed to by the committee before?

Mr. Ted Menzies: I so move.

The Chair: Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: A motion of reconsideration cannot come from an individual who voted against the motion.

The Chair: Is there anyone who voted in favour of the motion who would be willing to just make a motion that we get on with...?

Yes, Mr. Eyking.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Chairman, when the NAFTA thing was passed, many in this country didn't want it, but after it was passed, I'm sure committees moved on to other important issues of trade. That said, if I'm on the record of voting for this motion, I'm willing to start a new motion, if that is the right way to do it.

Am I on the record as voting for this previous motion? I don't know. I was at every meeting.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Maloney, if you could help out....

Mr. John Maloney: In light of the signing of the agreement with the United States and the vote in the House, I would move that we rescind the previous motion to travel.

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

You've heard the question. Should we go right to the vote?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: So we have dealt with that.

The one other item is that on Thursday we can have a meeting on future business—I assume you want to. Do you want to do it with the full committee at first and then take what's heard from the full committee to the subcommittee; or should we just go straight to the subcommittee, where all members of the committee give the input to their member of the subcommittee?

Monsieur Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Chairman, this is the tenth time I've raised my hand and I have yet to be recognized. I realize that I'm new to the committee, but my face is going to become familiar to you.

Most of you have served on this committee for some time. Therefore, you probably know what stage you've reached in your studies. I don't want to force my agenda on you, but I'm new here. I've already started to consider Bill C-24 on softwood lumber. Since the election of the chair was on the agenda, I was certain that we would begin considering future business on Thursday. That would give me time to get up to speed on the various studies and issues under consideration, to come up with some suggestions and especially to identify some priority issues.

Personally, in order to allow for some preparation time, I'd like the committee to begin considering future business on Thursday.

• (0935)

[*English*]

The Chair: Merci.

Ms. Guergis.

Ms. Helena Guergis: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm in support of Monsieur Cardin's proposal. I think it's a fair suggestion in dealing with the agenda on Thursday.

The Chair: Okay.

The only question is do we do that with a subcommittee meeting on future business or with the full committee, so everyone can have their direct say? What's the preference of committee?

Mr. Temelkovski.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.): I move that the entire committee meet on Thursday and we discuss a variety of options. Then we can tailor these further in our subcommittee meeting.

The Chair: Okay.

You've heard the suggestion. Does everyone agree with that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Excellent.

The meeting is adjourned.

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