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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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**Thursday, May 17, 2007**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Norman Doyle**

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## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Thursday, May 17, 2007

•(1125)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, CPC)):** Order, please.

Our meeting will now begin with the motion by Mr. Karygiannis, that the government put a moratorium on deporting undocumented workers until the committee holds hearings and reports to the House with its recommendations.

Is there debate?

Mr. Karygiannis.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, over the last year and a half, we have found out that the government has taken an aggressive approach to deporting undocumented workers in Canada who are trying to get on with their lives—and they've been in Canada for five to six years, and they present a need for trades that are thirsty for their skills.

Since we're going to be discussing undocumented workers in the upcoming few weeks, or in the fall, and we're going to have witnesses testify in front of us and we'll be making a report, I would ask that the minister put a moratorium on the deportation of these workers until this committee has a chance to fully hear what is happening. Over the summertime or fall, when we're in hearings, the minister can certainly put all of the resources they have used in the past year and a half to deport these people into making Canada a home for these folks.

**The Chair:** Is there any further comment?

Mr. Devolin.

**Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** I will be opposing this motion for a variety of reasons, the first of which is that it's open-ended. I don't think it's the appropriate role of this committee to try to tie the hands of the government indefinitely. This kind of moratorium could actually have a counterproductive impact by creating a perception that people who come to Canada, for whatever reason now, can live under some sort of a moratorium on being deported. I don't think it would be appropriate to put these handcuffs on the people who are implementing the policy in Canada.

We've had this discussion before. We as a committee are dealing with it, and I know that the government is dealing with it. The suggestion that somehow there's been some big change in the last year and a half, that everything was fine until a year and a half ago, is simply not true.

On the basis of those reasons, and others, I will be opposing this motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Devolin.

I have a list, and am going to Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

I agree with Mr. Karygiannis that this is a very important issue, and one that affects many people here in Canada. It affects many families in Canada; and it affects our economy, because we know that undocumented workers play a very valuable role in the current economy in many parts of Canada, and to lose them would put serious hardships on business and industry, and cause serious problems for families.

Mr. Chair, we have already passed a motion similar to this almost a year ago, on June 21, 2006, and it's currently being debated in the House in the form of a concurrence motion, beginning last Friday, having been moved by the member for Trinity—Spadina. That debate will continue, I believe, the first Friday that we're back after the break week, and then the House will have an opportunity to vote on that motion at that time. So I think it's very timely that the House has that discussion.

Given that, Chair, I'm not sure it's important to reiterate this today. I was going to suggest to Mr. Karygiannis that we might wait to table his motion on May 31, when we are expecting officials of the department to come and brief us about the deportation of undocumented workers. After that meeting, it might be important to discuss the motion then. That timing or sequence would certainly sit better with me.

So I wonder if there might be some interest in entertaining that suggestion, that we table it until May 31.

•(1130)

**The Chair:** I think I'll allow you to respond, Mr. Karygiannis, in case you want to cede to Mr. Siksay's request.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** I want to thank Mr. Siksay for making that friendly suggestion. However, at this point I am not prepared to put this aside, because at the end of the day—be it today, be it at the end of May—we're not going to be dealing with this issue, having full hearings and hearing from stakeholders, until probably in the fall. Any time we waste between now...every minute, every second that ticks, I believe people are being aggressively deported, so the sooner the message goes out, the better.

Last year there was a motion brought forward. It was going to be debated in the House, but we've had no hearings from stakeholders.

This committee now has decided to have public hearings and stakeholders. A whole bunch of people have been invited to come up, and those people are the ones who need to tell us what exactly is going on out there. If we, for any reason, do not send the right message to the House and to the minister that this committee is seriously looking at this, I don't think we'll be taken too seriously, and I don't think the people who will be coming in the fall will think we're doing due diligence to them.

**The Chair:** Mr. Batters.

**Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I found Mr. Siksay's suggestion to be somewhat intriguing. I am going to vote no to this motion, but I thought at least it would be good to have some officials come before us and brief us on the situation before I was to make up my mind. But if Mr. Karygiannis is going to proceed with this today, I'm going to be voting no. I think his assertion that people are being deported any more aggressively now than they were under the previous Liberal government is false.

As a new member of the committee, I look at this and say it's critical to maintain the integrity of the entire system. The government has already been very clear in stating that any regularization initiative for foreign nationals who have illegally remained in Canada is unfair to the hundreds of thousands of people who have applied for immigration to Canada through legal channels and have patiently waited for processing. I think we owe it to those people who have gone through the proper channels and made it through all of those hurdles to become permanent residents, to maintain the fairness and the integrity of the system.

Any foreign nationals, including those who currently live in Canada without legal status, can apply for permanent status; however, they will have to voluntarily leave the country before their application will be considered. There are several opportunities available to economic immigrants who wish to apply for permanent residence in Canada. These are the federal skilled worker class, the business classes, and the provincial nominee class, and over 130,000 people arrived in 2006 through one of these classes.

Mr. Chair, deportation is the responsibility of the minister for public security and emergency preparedness, and an effective removal program is essential, I say again, to the integrity of Canada's immigration system. A moratorium on deportations would simply act as a draw factor for others to come to Canada and remain without legal status. This both compromises the integrity of the legal immigration program and is unfair to those who are applying through legal channels.

Mr. Chair, and my fellow committee members, I think it's essential that those who are applying through the regular legal channels are respected. To circumvent this system and to have a moratorium, as is being suggested by Mr. Karygiannis, threatens the integrity of the entire system. I also note that this is being debated in the House through a concurrence motion.

So I won't be supporting Mr. Karygiannis' motion for those reasons, and I look forward to a thorough study of this topic, Mr. Chair.

• (1135)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Telegdi.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I've been around this committee long enough to recognize bureaucratise coming from the department and the department speaking through members of Parliament. I'm going to touch on the integrity of the system.

The integrity of the system has been seriously shaken. We have a system that doesn't allow people whom the economy needs to come into this country through legal means. We've reached the point where we have a crisis. This whole issue has been kicked around for a long time. In the last Liberal government we were working on regularization. I dare say it was one of those things that didn't come to fruition because of the short term of the Parliament at that time.

But I can tell you, from the evidence we have heard, that we have something like 200,000 to 500,000—and nobody really knows the number—people, and that includes dependants, undocumented workers who are essentially working underground.

I'm going to give credit, and very much in public, to the government. About a year ago we had a situation in which immigration officials raided schools and used kids to trap their parents who were undocumented workers. The government—Stockwell Day—made a proper response and told the department this was no longer acceptable, that this was not to be done.

I'm really hoping the government will come to its senses on this, because I think we need common sense to prevail. The economy is looking for people who can fill positions that are vacant, and I dare say that if we got rid of all these undocumented workers by some magic tomorrow, our economy would go into a recession.

We have worker shortages across the country. I don't need to tell the Conservatives the problems they're having attracting workers to the tar sands. Just a couple of days ago we saw the case of a worker shortage in P.E.I. that threatens the survival of a fish processing plant because they cannot find workers.

This problem goes right across the board. The committee has travelled extensively. We had representations made to the committee by people in the Maritimes who said, send us all your undocumented workers; we need immigrants.

But we need immigrants who fit the system. What we need is people with trade skills that the present point system does not allow into the country.

I think this is an opportunity for the Conservative government to really take a commonsensical approach, and they will get lots of credit for it because it's a problem that has to be fixed. But maintaining the line put out by the bureaucracy has grown quite tiresome, because it's been the same line for many years. They want to maintain the integrity of a system that is broken.

It's time we exercised some political will, and it's time the government of the day exercised political will to fix a broken system.

This motion speaks to that. I am glad it's being debated in the House and I'm glad we're going to be studying the issue. This is a commonsensical solution to a problem.

The process of regularization is not a free-for-all in which everybody says, I'm an illegal and I get documentation. If it's done in an orderly fashion, the people who come out from underground, if you will, have to register; there's a criminal check done on them; then they're given a work permit, during which time there is a further investigation done—and the length of the work permit can be anywhere from two to three years—and if they're successful and have proven themselves to be contributing to Canada, then a process can be put in place to regularize them, and they can apply for permanent standing.

● (1140)

But the solution of the bureaucrats is a non-solution. It is sweeping the problem under the rug and creating very real hardship for the hundreds of thousands of people who are involved, who are essentially helping to build this economy, and I think it's time we stop being ostriches and started dealing with the problem.

**The Chair:** Okay. I have Madame Faille, Mr. Karygiannis and Mr. Siksay, maybe then we can go to a vote on the motion.

Madame Faille.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is not the first time that the committee has dealt with this motion. My colleague's premise is that these people are in Canada illegally. True, their documents are not in order. But, in reality, if a number of them had access to a more helpful program that would allow them to renew their work permits, among other things, without having to leave the country, they would perhaps have chosen that solution in order to remain in good standing.

We are told that these people are all in Canada illegally. Their documents are not in order, no question. On the other hand, from a practical standpoint, employers are presently begging us to make the process of work permit renewal easier so that their employees, people they really need, can stay in the country and keep working.

Sometimes employers are prepared to do anything to protect their employees so that they can stay in Canada. There have been several cases in Montreal in the past few years. We cannot take it for granted that these people all came here illegally. Most of them arrived with work permits, or as visitors, and they found the country to their liking. Yet none of our rules allowed a transition when they got the guarantee of a job.

The points system has also been modified to favour better-educated people. At the moment, we need the people who are subject to rules designed to expel them. Last session, to help the committee in its work, we asked the department for briefing notes to show us the amount of money and effort expended from 2004 to the present on expelling people, precisely to find out if there have been more expulsions in recent years.

I feel that there are more cases, because the problem is much more glaring. Employers are begging us to come to grips with the matter, but I am not ready to say that there are more expulsions. I will say that, since 2004 as a member of Parliament and beforehand as a volunteer working with immigrants, I have been in a position to see

that there were a lot of unjustified expulsions. We could have regularized the situation of these people quickly. These were workers we needed, with families who were integrated, and who spoke French.

In Quebec, we have a special situation. When an immigrant speaks French, it is more difficult to send a little family away. The way in which we forced people to leave the country was also unacceptable. Using children as bait to lure their illegal parents into the open seems unreasonable, certainly in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

I think the committee must address this question. We have already asked the department to provide us with detailed information. The matter will be debated in the House. I am inclined to accept Bill's request to put off study on the motion until later. I believe that the committee is aware of the importance of the matter, but if we deal with the motion after the debate in the House, after hearing the evidence from the people from the department, we will be in a better position as a committee to make an enlightened decision.

● (1145)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Karygiannis and Mr. Siksay.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, I would urge members of the committee to deal with this motion today. Whether we table it for another 10 or 15 days or we deal with it today, it is a matter of urgency. The stakeholders we are bringing in need to know that we're serious about this matter; they need to know that this committee is looking at it very seriously.

With no disrespect to our colleagues on the Conservative side, but some material that's been prepared by the department and trying to tell us why we shouldn't be supporting this motion certainly flies in the faces of the individuals who have been in Canada for the last five or ten years, some people even longer than that. They have been underground and they're trying to regularize their standing in Canada.

Certainly we've seen overwhelmingly the aggressiveness of this government and the department. Last year they took children out of schools to use them as bait for the parents to come out of asylum. I'm sure that my good friend Mr. Batters has seen this and read this. I know that he is a new member on the committee, but certainly this needs to be addressed and needs to be addressed immediately.

So I would urge all members to support the motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Siksay is our last speaker, then I will call for the motion to be voted on.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you.

Mr. Chair, as I say, I don't disagree with Mr. Karygiannis that this is a very urgent issue. That's why, as I said, the NDP member for Trinity—Spadina has this on the agenda of the House as a concurrence issue at the moment, but I do want to put forward my suggestion to the committee about tabling this until May 31, when we've heard the briefing from officials on this.

The clerk informs me that the best way to accomplish that is to propose an amendment to the motion. The amendment would read, at the very beginning of the motion—

**The Chair:** Is this an amendment to the motion?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** We would add at the very beginning of the motion that, “At its meeting of May 31, 2007, the committee consider...” and then continue with the rest of the motion as Mr. Karygiannis has submitted it.

**The Chair:** So the question then would be on the amendment. And the amendment is that before the motion—

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, do I have to accept the amendment?

**The Chair:** No.

Okay, read out the amendment, Mr. Clerk.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Samy Agha):** It would read: “That at the meeting of May 31st, 2007, the Committee consider the following motion”.

**The Chair:** All in favour of the amendment, please raise your hands. All opposed to the amendment.

(Amendment negatived)

**The Chair:** All in favour of the main motion.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Can we have a recorded vote, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Okay. That's a fair request.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

● (1150)

**The Chair:** Congratulations, Mr. Karygiannis.

The third item on the agenda is the press release that the committee directed me to put in place.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, I would like to be given a little bit of time.

**The Chair:** We'll have a look at that after the press release.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** I'm wondering if you want me to allow the clerk to photocopy it, so that after we discuss the press release everybody can have a copy of this, because I'm the only one that seems to have it. This was addressed to you. It's from the minister to you.

It's from the minister to you, pretty well rapping our knuckles about the way that—

**The Chair:** I'm going to deal with the press release first, because this is three times we've postponed this. Then we'll try to see if we will deal with what you have there.

The committee directed me recently to put in place a press release on the fact that Citizenship and Immigration were calling on government to reject the proposed politicization—

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Chair, I don't have a copy.

**The Chair:** We're going to ensure that you get a copy in a moment.

I was directed by the committee some time ago, about a week or so ago, to do a press release on the immigration committee's call for

the government to reject the proposed politicization of the Immigration and Refugee Board, or IRB, appointments. It reads as follows:

By a vote of 7-4, the Standing Committee on Citizenship & Immigration passed a motion urging the government to reject the fifth recommendation of the Public Appointment Commission's report on the appointment process at the Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada (IRB).

A recently released Public Appointments Commission Secretariat report recommended that the current Advisory Panel and the Selection Board be merged and that both the Minister and the Chair each be given the ability to appoint three of the six members of the new panel.

The opposition members of the Committee disagreed with the 5th recommendation and called on government to reject it.

Norman Doyle, MP and Chair of the Committee, indicated that the Citizenship & Immigration Committee has been hearing evidence on the IRB appointments process as part of its upcoming report on refugee issues, to be tabled in the House in the coming weeks.

Do you want to discuss that in any way, shape, or form, or do you want me to release it and let it go?

We will hear from Mr. Siksay and Mr. Alghabra.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate your putting this together, Mr. Chair, but I don't think it deals with two of the other key issues that were raised in the report that the committee passed and made to the House. I think that's the one you tabled this morning. Is that correct? There is the issue of the committee's feeling that there was a crisis at the IRB—that the lack of appointments constituted a crisis—and also that we were urging the government to immediately proceed to fill the vacancies by moving on appointments and reappointments.

I think that those two points need to be part of this. It wasn't just our rejection of the fifth recommendation, but it was our—

**The Chair:** You mentioned the crisis in the IRB. What was the second point?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Appointments and reappointments need to be made.

**The Chair:** It was appointments and reappointments.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** Mr. Chair, you can take that motion that we passed last week. It has all the wording in there.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** In the third paragraph you've done commentary and tried to characterize the report. I think you need to add those two issues, because to my way of looking at it, they were key to the motion we passed and to that report.

If we're going to characterize it in the press release, I think that needs to be there. I would agree that we should attach the full report to the press release, but in the text of the press release I think we need to mention those two issues to be fair.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** What happened, Mr. Siksay, was the motion that we passed that was put forward by Omar last week, which contained those—

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** That's what I'm referring to.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** Yes, that's what I'm saying.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** That's what this is about.

**Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.):** I raise exactly the same point as Mr. Siksay has just raised. I was going to suggest to add it in either the second or the third paragraph, where—

**The Chair:** “The opposition members of the Committee disagreed with the 5th recommendation and called on government to reject it”, and then—

**Mr. Omar Alghabra:** Yes; it's because this press release basically reduces our motion to the fact that we just disagreed with the fifth recommendation, but the report also talked about a situation of crisis and also the paralysis in appointing and reappointing IRB members.

**The Chair:** Okay. Do you want to give it to me again and let me bring it back here?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** I think we can do it right now, Mr. Chair.

• (1155)

**Mr. Omar Alghabra:** We can add it right now, I think.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Chair, the other thing I'm struggling with is the third paragraph, which says “the opposition members of the committee”. It is my understanding that once a report is passed, it becomes the work of the committee, not necessarily any particular group of members on the committee.

I know it wasn't a unanimous report, and you pointed that out in the first paragraph—appropriately, I think—but I think that third paragraph should say, “The committee disagreed with the fifth recommendation and called on the government to reject it. The committee also called on the government to immediately fill the remaining board vacancies on the IRB.” Then there would be a final statement: “The committee also noted that this situation constituted a crisis at the IRB.”

**The Chair:** Did I go to you, Omar? Okay, you're finished.

Mr. Karygiannis.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, I tend to agree with what I'm hearing. Stating in the press release, “The opposition members of the committee disagree”.... I mean, if you look on this side, you'll see there are more opposition members, so it's the will of this committee

**The Chair:** Well, what I was trying to do, in all fairness, was reflect the views of both instead of the overall committee. That's what I was trying to do.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Can I finish? I thank you.

If you want to put that sentence in, you can say that the members of the committee recommended that the fifth recommendation take place, while the government members disagreed. You can have it that way if you want to put it in this.

Regarding the second paragraph, again, I'm not sure if that's the will of the committee or if this is where we're going. This is a press release that should be done from the committee versus a press release that reflects the wishes of the department.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** Or any one party.

**The Chair:** Well, the department isn't...okay.

Mr. Batters.

**Mr. Dave Batters:** I find myself agreeing with Mr. Karygiannis and Mr. Siksay. If he wants to indicate that the committee.... Instead of opening the statement with “The opposition members”, Mr. Karygiannis said that he'd be fine with putting in “but the

government members of the committee disagreed”. That would meet our needs.

It first talks about the committee as a whole, and it indicates who dissented. Otherwise, you have the vote—seven to four. I guess people could perhaps figure out who dissented, but it leaves it unclear.

So I'd like to respectfully agree with my colleague Mr. Karygiannis and have it added in that the government members of the committee disagreed. It would suffice for me.

**The Chair:** It seems fair enough. Thank you, Mr. Karygiannis.

Who's next? Mr. Wilson.

**Mr. Blair Wilson (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think the way the committee process works, and correct me if I'm wrong, is that it's the will of the committee to decide on motions that are going to be passed. I think this press release should reflect the work of the committee. Even putting in “by a vote of 7-4” is not, I think, necessary. It could just state that “The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration passed a motion”, and this is what we agreed to as a majority. To start talking about opposition parties or government parties, I think, limits the leverage that the committee has as a whole to say that we're working together collectively, all parties, all members, and this is what we've decided to pursue.

So especially in a news release that talks about politicization of a process, I would try to make this as non-partisan and as member-based as possible.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Bill...Mr. Siksay. I keep forgetting I'm not in camera anymore.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Chair, I just want to be clear. I agree with Mr. Wilson that this should be a report on the work of the committee that the committee takes ownership of, something that's passed and approved by the committee. I agree with him that we should remove that reference to the vote of seven to four, and the phrase “the opposition members of the committee” in the third paragraph. Also, I would oppose adding that the government members opposed, or whatever.

I think it should be generic about what action the committee has taken. That's in standing with my understanding, at least, of what happens when committees pass a motion, that the committee takes ownership of that, and further actions are taken in respect of the entire committee, not of any particular individual member or group on the committee.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Mr. Devolin.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** I presume that one of our general objectives here is to accurately communicate what has happened and as much as possible convey the reality of the committee. So to remove any reference to the fact that it was not unanimous.... This isn't a report; it's a press release. To make it sound like the whole committee was acting as one is, to me, to deliberately try to mislead the public by putting out a release that would likely lead people to draw the wrong conclusion, and that is that all the members of the committee....

I think the majority of members on the committee supported that report. The majority of members on this committee wanted a release to go out; they wanted it to go out from the chair. But quite frankly, I think it's going a step too far to then say let's write the release in such a way that it creates the false impression that everyone on the committee agreed with this. I think there ought to be a reference somewhere in here—

**The Chair:** That it wasn't unanimous agreement.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** Yes, that it wasn't unanimous.

Now, having said that, maybe one reference is sufficient, and it doesn't need to be restated. I just don't understand why we would be trying to mislead people when it's so easy to clarify that point.

**The Chair:** Mr. Telegdi.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** Actually, if it were unanimous, then we'd put that into the release. You always put in if it's unanimous, just to make sure people understand that.

To me, it's really no big deal whether you have it in there or not. I would stick it in the back and downplay it, and hopefully at the committee—

**The Chair:** Can we not find some goodwill here to do this?

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** Yes, and I'm trying to—

**The Chair:** I realize it's a touchy kind of subject when you're putting out a press release and members don't totally agree with it and this kind of thing. But is there some goodwill I can find here to indicate, in some way, shape, or form, that it's not unanimous?

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** Mr. Chairman, perhaps we could go back and look at the releases we put out in the previous Parliament, and handle this in the same way. What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

**The Chair:** In an attempt to find some common ground here, can we not leave the first line as it starts now, "By a vote of"?

Mr. Karygiannis feels it's fine. Madame Faillie feels it's fine. Mr. Alghabra says it's fine.

So I think we'll—

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** And if people want to leave in "7-4", you could say—

**The Chair:** Yes. Nobody knows how it was, or who.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** If people want to state how it was, by all means.

**The Chair:** Okay. So let's leave it in there—"By a vote of 7-4"—and then continue on. I think the clerk has your directions down fine and can draft that.

**Mr. Omar Alghabra:** We could even remove "The opposition members".

**The Chair:** Yes.

I think it's a good compromise to leave that first line as it is. It gives some credence to the fact that it isn't a unanimous decision. I think that's the best we can do on it at this time.

So will we just leave it to the clerk, then, to draft this?

I thank you for your cooperation—

**Mr. Omar Alghabra:** If this is just a matter of adding a line, we could do that now.

**The Chair:** No, no, it's not a matter of adding a line. I think there were more substantive things that had to go in there that reflected the full motion itself.

I will make sure, if I'm sending it out, that I get in touch with maybe one of each of you to see if it's okay.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** Mr. Chair, when would you be tabling the report in the House?

**The Chair:** The refugee report?

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** Yes. It's not going to be tabled until we come back?

**Mr. Omar Alghabra:** This motion was tabled this morning, but the report was not tabled.

**The Chair:** Yes, I tabled the motion this morning at 10 o'clock.

So that is that.

Mr. Karygiannis has asked for a moment to bring to our attention—this is not on the agenda, mind you—a letter that was sent to me. I have not yet received it. I don't know how you guys got it ahead of me, unless I'm not really checking my mail as frequently as you are.

In any event, Mr. Karygiannis wants to bring to the attention of the committee a letter that was sent by the minister to me, copies of which were sent, I think, to all of you.

● (1205)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chairman, I can read it into the record. This is from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

**The Chair:** Isn't it quite lengthy, Mr. Karygiannis?

I'll go to Mr. Siksay for one moment, and then I'll get right back to you.

Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Chair, I'd prefer to see some notice given for this. Then we can discuss it once we've all received it and when you've received it yourself. I think it's premature to do it now.

I appreciate that Mr. Karygiannis is very concerned about the contents. I had a quick look at it, but—

**The Chair:** And I haven't even seen the letter.

I'm inclined to say that as well, Mr. Karygiannis. I would like to see the letter first before we bring it on as an agenda item.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** If I may, Chair, this is a letter that—



**The Chair:** You know, I want to cooperate with you on this, but I don't think it's appropriate—

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Well, can we finish that—

**The Chair:** —that we bring that letter before us right now when none of us has even seen it. It's been addressed to me, and I haven't seen the letter. I want to see the letter in the privacy of my office, to talk it over, and to absorb it, and then to bring it to the committee if it is appropriate to bring it to the committee.

**Mr. Blair Wilson:** On a point of order, I would like to agree with the position you're taking, and I would say that if the letter was addressed to the chair, you have a right. You have no idea what the content is—

**The Chair:** I haven't received it.

**Mr. Blair Wilson:** But before we actually read it into the record here, I think it's proper procedure that you have an opportunity to read it first.

**The Chair:** Right. So I want to—

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** May I ask for the following, Chair?

**The Chair:** I want to go to Madam Faillie first of all, before we do that, Mr. Karygiannis.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Meili Faillie:** I think that the letter is addressed to the committee as a whole. So all members of the committee ought to be aware of it. I have read it and I find it quite inappropriate.

On the other hand, when we met on citizenship, we asked officials to come here to talk to us about the memo that they had sent to us and, according to which they had misled the committee during the presentation.

I would like us to discuss this matter at the same time as we deal with the people from the department who came here and misled us.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We'll put this down as an agenda item, if all agree, for our next meeting, and we will talk about it at that time.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank you for taking that direction, but this letter has a serious effect that the minister addresses to this committee—

**The Chair:** I know, but now we're getting into the actual talking about the letter and what have you, and I can't allow anyone to do through the back door what we can't do through the front.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Allow me 30 seconds, Mr. Chair, and then if you think that I'm going into an area—

**The Chair:** Okay. I'll give you one minute on that.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** This letter, certainly, that I received in my office this morning has me very much concerned. The fact that you haven't received it but you will receive it... I think the fact that you want to put it on the agenda for our next meeting is wonderful, but I am concerned about the tone of the letter and the aggressiveness that the minister has taken towards this committee, when the committee is trying to do its work. So I think it's a really important—

**The Chair:** Okay, I see your point. I'm not going to entertain any more submissions on this letter, because I've indicated to Mr. Karygiannis that I'm going to have this on as an agenda item, and I want the chance to see this letter. I'm not going to entertain any more talk about this letter until it's on the agenda.

If we don't have any further business, then I will say the meeting is adjourned.

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