



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

CIMM • NUMBER 064 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, June 19, 2007

—
Chair

Mr. Norman Doyle

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, CPC)): Our meeting will now come to order.

We had our subcommittee meeting a couple of days ago, and you'll see before you the 9th report of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure of the standing committee. This is pretty well what we recommend to our full committee. We'll just go over it briefly.

We talked about the study on the loss of Canadian citizenship, and we're recommending that we consider the draft report as the first item of business in the fall of 2007. We are informed by our analyst that she would have a copy of that report maybe within the next few weeks, mid-summer maybe. If you so desire, she can distribute that to us at that time, so we'll be able to look it over and have a heads-up and what have you for the meetings coming up.

Okay, we might as well wait for a few minutes and start again.

Mr. Blair Wilson (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): I apologize, Mr. Chair. We were in a private meeting before.

The Chair: I know.

We just began a moment ago, and we're considering now the 9th report of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure. We had our subcommittee meeting a couple of days ago, and you have the sheets in front of you that we've given out. The recommendation is that we'll consider the draft report and the loss of Canadian citizenship as the first item of business when we come back in the fall. We were mentioning a moment ago that the analyst informed me that she'll have a copy of it maybe mid-summer, so you can have a look at it and have a heads-up when we come back for consideration of it in the fall.

Also, the meetings regarding the study will be held outside the committee's usual meeting time. We won't eat up our usual committee meeting time. We'll do it outside of that, unless you want it otherwise, as the report says here.

I'll stop there for a moment. Is there any discussion on that part of the report, that we would have it as the first item of business? This is what the steering committee is recommending, that when we come back that will be number one on the list, and we'll have meetings outside of the usual meeting time. Is everyone pretty well okay with that?

Mr. Batters.

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): I'm just wondering, Mr. Chair, why we have to hold meetings outside the committee's usual meeting times to study this draft report. Why can't we just study this report within the usual meeting times of the committee? That would certainly be my preference, and I would bet that if you go around the table, that would be the preference of a number of members on the committee, to not devise separate meeting times, to just dedicate our normal Tuesday to Thursday, 11 to 1 o'clock, or whenever our meetings are in the fall, to this report.

The Chair: Mr. Telegdi.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): I guess one of the reasons we're doing that is that on this committee we really have a passion for the issue of citizenship and immigration. There are, quite frankly, a lot of problem areas. We want to be able to get it done. I can appreciate that if you don't have the same kind of passion, then you might not feel quite the same way as many of us do.

The reality is that immigration is, has been, and continues to be the lifeblood of this country, and we have issues coming at us head-on. I think the committee can make a real contribution, and hopefully the ministry will see the wisdom of the contribution to make some real changes that will improve the lives of Canadians. This committee has always been pretty passionate on the issues when it comes to citizenship and immigration.

The Chair: Mr. Siksay.

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

Chair, I just wanted to add that when we first agreed to do the work on citizenship in this Parliament, we did agree to do that as an extra subject outside the regular meetings of the committee, partly in recognition of the amount of time we spent on citizenship issues in the last Parliament, to the exclusion of any issues related to immigration, almost entirely at the request of the government of the day. Promises were made that if we did that work, there would be citizenship legislation forthcoming. Unfortunately, that didn't happen.

I'd like to maintain that commitment to do it as an extra topic. We're facing the same situation in which we have legislation promised for the fall. We'll see if that promise comes through. I hope it does. I would like to maintain the commitment to do this as an extra piece of work, and get on with our immigration agenda, on which there are a lot of topics for us to deal with in the fall.

So I speak in favour of maintaining it as an extra subject.

The Chair: Mr. Wilson and Madame Faillie.

Mr. Blair Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was just going to reiterate the point that Mr. Siksay talked about. When we were initially putting through our schedule of work, one of the issues was lost Canadian citizenship, and we agreed that we would be dealing with that outside of our normal work.

The only other point I would add is the fact that a lot of these individuals, a lot of these Canadians who lost their citizenship, are aging. It behooves us as a committee to expedite the discussions on this issue while they're still with us.

In addition, there are a lot of issues that we need to deal with in the immigration file, and the two days a week that we meet aren't enough to deal with all of the issues, so we have to go into these extra meetings.

So I'd be in favour of them.

• (1110)

The Chair: Madame Faille.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): We do not have many objections to hold the meetings outside the usual meeting times. However, if it were possible—

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm very slow here this morning. I'm sorry about that.

Okay.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faille: We do not have any objection to hold the meetings outside the usual committee meeting times. However, our whip's office—

[*English*]

The Chair: Please hang on a moment, Madame Faille, until we can get a proper channel.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faille: This is a test!

[*English*]

The Chair: Is it working now, Andrew? Okay.

I thought you were fluently trilingual?

Ms. Meili Faille: Then I'll speak in Chinese.

[*Translation*]

The Bloc has no objection to hold the meetings outside the usual meeting times. However, if it were possible, we prefer not to meet on Monday. I do not know whether we have any idea when the rotations will begin. If we continue to meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays—

[*English*]

The Chair: We're not aware just yet what the schedule is, but of course we will within the next month or so. We'll keep that in mind.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faille: I am going to tell Mr. Batters why we are holding extra meetings on citizenship. The issue of skilled workers would be discussed next. Consequently, if we are not too busy in the fall, we will be able to deal with this matter at the end of the fall. At

Mr. Jaffer's request, the committee does have quite a busy schedule. If we manage to get everything we plan to do done, we could discuss the issue of skilled workers in the fall.

[*English*]

The Chair: The clerk reminds me that it's not a very big report. We could deal with it fairly quickly anyway. The hope is that we'll deal with it in two, three, or four meetings maybe, but who knows? Anyway, the consensus is clear that it will be done outside of the usual times.

We'll go on to the next part of our report.

Mr. Komarnicki.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Obviously Bill C-57—

The Chair: Okay, we're getting to that as well.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Are we? I don't see it in the report. Is the subcommittee not aware of Bill C-57?

The Chair: I have a note made of it here. Let's deal with that a bit later on.

Next we have this:

That, in relation to its study on Undocumented and Temporary Foreign Workers: All members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration travel to Vancouver, British Columbia, Calgary, Alberta, Fort McMurray, Alberta, Toronto, Ontario, and Montreal, Quebec, from October 22, 2007 to October 26, 2007.

Madame Faille, ladies first.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faille: We had talked about holding a meeting in my riding, in Vaudreuil-Soulanges, rather than Montreal. I live 15 minutes from Dorval airport, but, I am not in Montreal.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Telegdi.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: That would be a fine idea.

• (1115)

The Chair: I'd go along with that.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: I'd love to visit Meili's riding.

The other issue is that we should really touch base in the Maritimes. For the longest time it was thought that the Maritimes had too many workers and not enough work.

The Chair: We touched on that.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: The last time we toured, some of the people who came forward really impressed me. They have a problem with temporary workers in particular. I was reading that a fishery plant in P.E.I. was in danger of being closed because the temporary workers they tried to get in from Russia were held up. Other folks in the Maritimes suggested we send all of our undocumented workers to the Maritimes, because there is a real recognition that immigration comes along with economic activity.

The Chair: We did touch on that in our meeting. I think it was agreed that it wasn't as much of an issue in the Maritimes as it was in these bigger centres. But I'm open to it. I have no objection at all to heading down home, provided the meeting is on a Thursday so I'm home for the weekend.

An hon. member: Maybe it could be in St. John's.

The Chair: Yes. We can put that on there and see what happens.

Does the committee want to specify a city, like St. John's maybe?

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Are we going there? We still haven't resolved whether we should go there or not.

The Chair: Would people like to go down to Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, or Nova Scotia? I'm easy either way. What would you like to do?

Next on the list are Mr. Wilson, Mr. Siksay, and Mr. Alghabra.

Mr. Blair Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thought we had also discussed, on the trip to Vancouver, making some time to go to Whistler. There is a big problem with labour shortages there.

The Chair: Let's deal with Andrew's point first. Does anyone want to go to the Maritimes?

Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: I'd prefer to see what interest there is from the Maritimes or Atlantic Canada before we schedule a trip there, given that none of the folks on the list right now are from that area. Mr. Telegdi makes the point that there have been some specific incidents. As the Atlantic Canadian on the committee, maybe you could do some checking to see if there is a critical mass there that might make it worthwhile.

The Chair: That's a good point. Leave it with me. I'll get back to the clerk and report to the committee at a later date.

Mr. Blair Wilson: If I can go back to the point I was raising earlier, if we're in Vancouver it's an hour and a half drive to Whistler. I think it would be well worth our while to go up there to get a sense of how the economy is booming. There are restaurants that can't open and construction sites that are slowing down. Additionally, we'd be able to tour some of the 2010 Olympic venue sites.

The Chair: Mr. Alghabra

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Let's make a trip to the Maritimes if there's interest. If there are a lot of witnesses from that region it would be much more cost-effective, but if we there are only one or two witnesses, why don't we bring them in?

The Chair: Yes. I'll report back to the committee, but I don't perceive it as being a big issue.

Mr. Batters.

Mr. Dave Batters: I'm just looking at the timeframe for this. That would mean five cities in five days. Then we would take into account Mr. Wilson's request to go to Whistler, which is beautiful country. But I don't believe you can do Vancouver, Whistler, and the others. I think that would be a gruelling trip.

I would suggest doing western Canada in four days, and then going to Toronto and Montreal. If we have a Maritime destination, we could do that another week.

The Chair: It would be kind of gruelling.

Mr. Dave Batters: You want to do the witnesses justice. If you want to have time to go to places like Whistler, I don't believe you

can do it in five days. That's my recommendation anyway. We could do western Canada separately. Another week we could go to Toronto, Madame Faillie's riding, and perhaps the Maritimes.

• (1120)

The Chair: We are setting a bit of a gruelling schedule for ourselves. Do we need to do that? Why not spread it out a little bit?

Did you have a follow-up comment you wanted to make, Omar, before I go to Andrew?

Mr. Omar Alghabra: I wanted to follow up on the previous comments.

Yes, I understand it's a demanding schedule, but the reason is that we have a lot of other things we want to look after, including Bill C-57, including foreign credentials. So we need to try to be as efficient as possible, and that's why maybe it's going to be tough on the committee to make choices as to where we're going to go, but I think it's reasonable to try to get as much as we can from the trip within one week.

The Chair: Mr. Telegdi.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: I think we could do a week and a half. We don't necessarily have to do everything in one week, because then we really get rushed. I think we want to see what's happening up at Whistler, so if we're going to do Vancouver, then we're going to need another half day for Whistler, because you just can't do a half day in Vancouver and then run up to Whistler, so I think probably a week and a half would be good.

The Chair: Yes. We don't need to do it at a leisurely pace, but it shouldn't be a gruelling thing where we have to cram it all in over one week. I think we should take a little bit of time to relax a little bit as well.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: I think symbolically as well it's important for us to touch down in the Maritimes. And the reason I say that is that normally when you looked at the Maritimes, you never thought they wanted immigration, but the fact is that they very much do, and if we touch down someplace, maybe we can bring other people from the Maritimes to that place. I think you'll find you get a good response.

The Chair: Newfoundland, for instance, has just come up with a new immigration policy and a new immigration study that they want to pursue, so it's likely an idea to drop down there and meet with some of the government ministers who are pushing it. I would be happy to do that.

Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Covering as many bases as we can would be great, it's important, but if we're going to travel to all these cities, you might want to expand and have one-hour hearings on undocumented workers and then you might want to invite other people. For example, if we were to go to Montreal, there are people there who are affected by the Iraqi refugees and there could be people affected by these foreign credentials. So you might want to invite other people. If you're going to be there for the morning, you can stagger the meetings: an hour and a half on undocumented workers, half an hour on something else, and then an hour on something else.

The Chair: The steering committee decided to separate the two. You'll see that on the following page, Jim.

In relation to the study on Iraqi refugees, the standing committee would travel to Toronto on Monday, November 19, and invite the organization's representatives to appear before the committee in Ottawa.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: The only thing I'm saying, Chair, is that there are Iraqi refugees in Montreal as well as out west. We might want to take this into consideration and, instead of sitting for two hours, we might want to sit for two and a half hours; and if other people are there, we can invite them to come and give testimony on those subjects.

The Chair: Two hours? Yes.

Go ahead, Andrew.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: When we sit as a committee, we pretty well sit most of the day when we go someplace. We'll be there before lunch, after lunch.

The Chair: Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Blair Wilson: I tend to agree with what Mr. Batters had to say. Coming from the west, I do the gruelling flight on a regular basis.

If we could separate and possibly do four days in the west, hit Vancouver, Calgary, Fort McMurray, and Whistler in four days and then do it on a weekend, so we do it Tuesday to Friday and then fly back on Friday, then people can choose if they want to stay over on Saturday or Sunday—it's their own time.

The Chair: That's pretty well acceptable to everyone, I think. We'll let the clerk figure that out.

Mr. Blair Wilson: And then the following week, or some other time, do three days in the centre or the east, do Toronto, Montreal, and the Maritimes. It would be the same thing: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday; Friday in St. John's or wherever it is, and then people travel back on the Friday or the Saturday, and it's not going to affect their schedules.

•(1125)

The Chair: What were you going to say, Mr. Clerk?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Sammy Agha): I was just going to say that from what I'm hearing from the committee members, you want to go to Vaudreuil-Dorion instead of Montreal; St. John's, Newfoundland; Whistler, B.C.; and to extend the trip from October 22 to October 31.

That's what I'm hearing.

The Chair: Now, who did I have that I didn't hear?

Ms. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Chair, I was essentially going to make an amendment. Is that the appropriate way—to propose an amendment?

It would read that in relation to its study on undocumented and temporary foreign workers, the points system, Iraqi refugees, and immigration consultants—so all of the issues that we have coming up that we've agreed to—we travel to Vancouver, British Columbia; Whistler, British Columbia. We'd add in the Montreal area, Quebec, something like that, and then add “plus Atlantic Canada”, so that we leave it open. And we'd make the dates from October 15 to October 26—so a two-week period to fit all of that in.

The Chair: That sounds good.

Okay, I have to go to Dave first, Jim, because he had his hand up. Is it something in relation to...?

Mr. Dave Batters: I don't think it matters whether you go the week before or the week after, as was suggested by the clerk. You could extend it to October 31. You could start the trip on a Tuesday, do it in whichever order you want. You could do Calgary, then Fort McMurray, and then Vancouver on a Thursday, Whistler on a Friday, and then for those who choose to stay in the beautiful location of Whistler for the weekend, that would be fabulous. For those who choose to travel home to their ridings and then resume the study the following week in Toronto, that would be great too. That would be a great plan.

The Chair: I'll go to Jim, but the clerk will try to figure all this out.

First I want to hear from Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I think we have to do justice to the western provinces. I could be wrong, but I don't see anything here about touching down in Winnipeg and/or Regina or Saskatoon. I mean, Winnipeg certainly is an area where you have a lot of undocumented workers as well as other interested individuals.

The Chair: It's going to be hard to touch all these. I mean, we are going to have House duties as well.

Before we recap what we're doing here and what direction we might be giving the clerk....

Mr. Alghabra.

Mr. Omar Alghabra: In the spirit of things, I was going to suggest that Mississauga is the sixth largest city in the country, and we have a lot of issues. In fact, the mayor herself has spoken to me about the issues of undocumented workers and immigration settlement. Fifty percent of Mississauga's population was born outside of Canada. Why wouldn't we stop there when we're in Toronto?

The Chair: Okay, we're really expanding now. The next thing, of course, is we're going to have every city in Canada covered.

But that's a good point, Omar. We'll try to accommodate you.

Mr. Dave Batters: We're talking about excluding two provinces completely.

Mr. Omar Alghabra: But Toronto will have enough witnesses on its own to fill up the whole thing.

The Chair: Okay, I think we've heard enough on this, haven't we? I think Mr. Siksay's amendment to....

What do we have here, Mr. Clerk, to try to clarify?

The Clerk: From my understanding, the committee is deciding on whether, in relation to its study on undocumented and temporary foreign workers, the points system, Iraqi refugees, and immigration consultants, all members of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration will travel to Vancouver, British Columbia; Whistler, British Columbia; Calgary, Alberta; Fort McMurray, Alberta; Toronto, Ontario; and Vaudreuil-Dorion, Quebec; and one city in the Atlantic—which is yet to be determined—from October 15, 2007, to October 26, 2007.

• (1130)

The Chair: So what do you feel?

Mr. Komarnicki.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: I think certainly the area that is to be looked at has been expanded quite significantly, and that's fair. I'm not sure if it can be arranged in the time that the committee is talking about, but notably in Saskatchewan and Manitoba—I think Mr. Karygiannis mentioned this—they have no representation at all. Quite frankly, Manitoba has probably used the provincial nominee program quite extensively and the temporary foreign worker program, as has Saskatchewan.

In the north and southeast part of the province, in my constituency in particular, in the booming industry, it is an issue as well. If we're going wider and if we're including extra subjects, which is not a bad idea, we should probably take the time to at least get representation from both western provinces that are missed by making a touchdown in Winnipeg and Regina or Saskatoon. I think leaving them out totally is probably not a great idea.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Are you taking us out to dinner when we're there?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: I'll take you out to dinner. In fact, I think it's a good idea to go to Meili's riding. You might want to come to my riding, and I can take you out to a couple of interesting places in Estevan, Saskatchewan.

The Chair: We'll try to satisfy everyone here. I think that's a good point you're making there, Ed. I think we should.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Regina, Saskatoon, or Estevan. Those are three cities. We may want to pick one of those three.

The Chair: I'm just lost here now.

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Can I make a suggestion?

The Chair: Yes, please do.

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Is there a chance that we could break the committee into two halves, and then we could go to various locations?

The Chair: I don't think I'd want to see that. I'd like to get around to all these places.

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Sure, we will on behalf of the committee, but not every member of the committee will go, so we would have half the committee going to various cities and the other half going to other cities.

The Chair: I'm sorry, I wouldn't want Mr. Batters alone, unsupervised.

Mr. Dave Batters: We don't necessarily have to have every member of the committee travel to every city. The parties could decide how they would split that up as they chose.

You could have two members of the Conservatives, two members of the Liberals, however you want to split it up.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Chair, I think it is important that the committee travel as a whole, because when we hear witnesses, some committee members, when we come to do our report, might have a disagreement on what was said and what wasn't said. I think we all need to be together since you're looking at about three reports that are affecting people's lives.

Certainly if you read the *Toronto Star* over the weekend—

The Chair: I'd like to see the committee all together, too.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: But if you read the report over the weekend in the *Toronto Star*, it said that we're playing with people's lives. That is what we are affecting here. So by splitting up members of the committee, to have some go here and some go there, certainly we are not doing justice to the people we're serving.

The Chair: I agree.

Mr. Telegdi.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Actually, we travelled in 2005, and we touched on every capital, and on top of that, we touched on Montreal, KW in Ontario next to Toronto, and we touched on Vancouver as places outside of provincial capitals. We went as a whole committee, and it was quite a pleasant trip, and we actually found out that we could probably get along quite well outside of the committee room.

The Chair: It gives us an opportunity to bond.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: One of the things I found was that if you go to a smaller place, boy oh boy, you get good treatment. Do you remember when we went to Kitchener-Waterloo? We had the best media of any of the places, because you don't have a parliamentary committee show up every day.

When we went to Toronto, everybody ignored us. So if we're going to go to Toronto, are we going to spend two days in Toronto? We might be better off just to do Scarborough on the east side and do Mississauga on the west side, because it makes it easier for the surrounding areas to come in.

I think it should be one.

The Chair: I think it should be one, also.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: I think at that point you should seriously look at hitting every area. We even had calls from the Northwest Territories the last time we travelled, saying that they wanted us up there, and we turned them down.

Also, what we're doing is raising the flag around the whole issue, and it's great that people would want us there.

I wonder, Mr. Clerk, if you would look up the invitation that we had from the Northwest Territories and circulate it, because I kind of felt bad that we ended up ignoring them. If people want the parliamentary committee, we should go.

• (1135)

The Chair: Do we agree that we'll go as one committee?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I prefer it that way.

Mr. Dave Batters: We need to sort out the cities, though, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Okay, listen, are we going to leave it to the clerk to try to put together what he's heard here, sorting out the cities and what you have you—

Mr. Dave Batters: He's heard a lot of that.

The Chair: —and have him distribute that to us during the next couple of weeks?

An hon. member: It'll be in the minutes for this meeting.

The Chair: What should we do? I await your direction on this.

We'll go to Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Chair, I do have an amendment on the table, and it hasn't been withdrawn. I would be prepared to add an additional clause about Regina or Winnipeg—

An hon. member: Or both.

Mr. Bill Siksay: —and then let the amendment stand and see where the committee wants to go with that amendment.

Chair, there's nothing stopping us from having meetings on the weekend between those two weeks, as well. So we would work over that weekend.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Batters.

Mr. Dave Batters: There's been some discussion here of going, instead of to Toronto, to Mississauga and to Scarborough. That was my understanding.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Yes. It's one city.

Mr. Dave Batters: The members opposite are passionate about where we go. I think you'd better settle on where you want to go and give the clerk that direction, so we have that direction.

From our perspective, Mr. Komarnicki's and mine, we definitely want Saskatchewan to be covered; and Winnipeg, we've decided, should be covered. You can debate where to go in Saskatchewan. Probably the further south—

Ed's riding is Estevan. Madame Faille seems supportive of Moose Jaw, where we have a tonne of foreign workers. We have a huge beef plant there, a packing plant there, and there are also a number of trucking outfits. Moose Jaw is only 45 minutes outside of Regina. It has a lovely mineral spa and.... Pardon me?

Ms. Meili Faille: It has a good hockey team.

Mr. Dave Batters: And there's a great hockey team in Moose Jaw.

Madame Faille, I'm liking you more and more by the minute.

Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, would be very welcoming. And talk about getting some press coverage. I tend to agree with Mr. Telegdi: if you go to Toronto, it may be like a tree falling in the forest; if you go to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, it's a big event.

Anyway, I think we do have to go to Saskatchewan and we have to go to Manitoba. I'll defer to your judgment as to whether you want to have one meeting in Toronto or in Scarborough and Mississauga. It's not for me to decide. That's not my area.

The Chair: Go ahead, Jim.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, I think we can all self-serve here by saying that we want to go here and there. I would make the proposition that we don't go to a particular member's riding or to a particular city. Toronto is neutral. It represents everybody. If we go to Scarborough, then it seems that I get preferential treatment. If we go to Mississauga, it might be that Mr. Omar Alghabra gets some preferential treatment. So I would say Toronto, certainly. If you want to make it a day and a half because of all the things we have, that's fine. But I would suggest that we take Mr. Siksay's motion and add in there—or I'll make a friendly amendment—that we certainly add the two provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and we let the clerk put in the locations and the cities where we go.

The Chair: Okay.

We'll go to Mr. Komarnicki and Mr. Siksay, and then let's do something on this.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: I tend to agree with Jim in some measure, in the sense that if Mr. Siksay would be prepared to amend to say one city—

The Chair: I'm sure he will.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: —in Saskatchewan and one city in Manitoba, we would make representation to the clerk as to which city that should be.

Certainly Mr. Batters and I can work at trying to find where the best location would be for what we want to accomplish. It may be Moose Jaw, it may be Regina, or it may be Estevan. But let's just leave it open at one city from Saskatchewan and one from Manitoba, which would likely be Winnipeg, and let us work it out with the chair. I think we can probably resolve which city that should be in Saskatchewan. It would be the one most—

The Chair: Do you want to repeat what you have there, Bill?

Mr. Blair Wilson: I think it would be fair if you let the committee work it out for the committee, not just you.

The Chair: Just one moment, please. I'm going to let Bill repeat his amendment to see what we have here.

• (1140)

Mr. Bill Siksay: Chair, the amendment was to add the other issues we're working on in the fall: the points system; Iraqi refugees and immigration consultants; and adding Whistler, one city in Atlantic Canada, and I'm going to say Regina or Winnipeg, Chair, because once we depart from major air centres, our travel schedule will be shot all to hell. I just don't think smaller cities are possible, given the kind of travel we'll be doing. So I'll say Regina and Winnipeg, and the dates would be from the 15th to the 26th.

Mr. Dave Batters: Regina and Winnipeg?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Blair Wilson: Chair, if I may....

The Chair: I have Andrew on the list first, and then we have to move on.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: I'm just trying to get this clear. Are we going to be listening to Iraqi refugees when we're in Toronto as well? That's incorporated. I think we're going to need two days in Toronto, and I think we should go on either side of it.

I'll disagree with Bill in the sense that there are a lot of people in the country who don't live right at airports, and if we drive a little bit and accommodate some of the members of the committee, well, so be it. I do find that when we go to the centres, when we go into Vancouver and have hearings, everybody pretty well ignores it.

The Chair: Well, we have 10 days in nine cities, so we could add an extra day if it's cramming it a little bit too much.

Let's vote on this amendment, because if we keep going around the table on this, everyone has their own cities that they want to get into. We could do this for the next two hours, I'm sure.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: All right, but just as a comment there for Mr. Siksay, picking Regina just because it is Regina...it might be inconvenient, but in fairness to Mr. Batters, Moose Jaw is about a 45-minute drive and it does have a lot of amenities there and things of interest and perhaps the types of issues that we might want to raise. So if we're going to make it Regina, we might want to make it Moose Jaw and go from there.

The Chair: Is there any objection to Moose Jaw here? Is there any possible way we can resolve this by putting Moose Jaw on the agenda, please? Is everyone in favour of putting Moose Jaw on that agenda? I'd love to see Moose Jaw, by the way. I've never seen it.

I'm not entertaining any more discussion on this. Let's put Moose Jaw on the agenda, and an extra day in Toronto. Will that satisfy everyone, some time in Moose Jaw and an extra day in Toronto?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Bill Siksay: That's fine with me, Chair, as long as instead of Vancouver, we meet in Burnaby, B.C., then, which is central. If we're going to go to everybody's riding, then I want to go to my riding too.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Absolutely. Let's extend this for another week.

Mr. Bill Siksay: No, instead of Vancouver, Burnaby is the first suburb out of Vancouver. The Metrotown Hilton hotel is not in my riding but right on the edge of my riding. It's a great place to meet. Let's go there. We'll have the Vancouver hearing there.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: It's gone too far, Chair. Is this part of the Conservative playbook?

The Chair: I understand everyone's concerns here. You want to get the committee into your own particular area, your own particular riding, and that's fair ball. But I don't know how we can accommodate so many different concerns unless we're going to be on the road for three or four weeks, or a month.

Mr. Telegdi.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Doing Burnaby or doing Vancouver is no big deal.

The Chair: Yes. What's the big difference? Let's do Burnaby instead of Vancouver. Is that what you want to do?

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Well, yes, that's what we meant.

• (1145)

The Chair: Okay. That's fine with me. We'll let the people from Vancouver who want to be heard come over to Burnaby. I'm easy with that.

So let's leave it at that and try to accommodate Burnaby and Moose Jaw. It seems to me that if we can get a little bit of extra time in Toronto, that might solve your problem as well, Andrew.

Let's leave it there. Let's not even comment further on this until—

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Well, Mr. Chair, if you're going to do that and have two days in Toronto, stick one in Mississauga and stick one in Scarborough.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: That's right.

The Chair: Okay, that's the way we'll divide it up.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: And if I might make a suggestion to the clerk, check with city halls, because they're really great. If you can get a city hall, they're set up for meetings such as ours. And it also makes it a bigger deal in the local community.

The Chair: So that part of it is settled, right?

Okay, thank you for all your input into that.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: So does that mean, then, Chair, that November 19 is out of the question?

The Chair: The what?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: November 19. Since we're going to be two days in Toronto, November 19 on the Iraqi issue—

The Chair: Let's go to that next part. Turn over your sheets.

Mr. Dave Batters: Mr. Karygiannis is asking a question.

The Chair: Yes, that's why I am addressing it right here. Let's turn over the sheets.

Are you clear?

Okay, the clerk is clear, thank you.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Perhaps I could make one more point. Ms. Grewal was gracious to say that if we were at or near Fleetwood she would invite the committee for a dinner at her home—

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Last time we had the committee at my place.

The Chair: That would be nice. Thank you. You are very gracious, and we will certainly take you up on that.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: So the committee will come for dinner.

The Chair: The committee will come. You serve it, and they will come.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Would you want to have a sitting in your riding, along Burnaby and Fleetwood?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Yes, it's very close to Burnaby. It's just 20 minutes away.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Why don't we do half in Burnaby and half in Fleetwood, and then have supper at her house?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Yes, supper at my home.

The Chair: Good stuff. Okay, thank you, Ms. Grewal.

Mr. Bill Siksay: I'm not sure that's a practical suggestion in terms of hearing times, in Ms. Grewal's riding. It's not as well served by public transit and whatever, and a number of the groups that we're hearing from are based in Burnaby as well. So it doesn't make quite as much—

Mrs. Nina Grewal: After the committee is what I'm saying. At a later time we can have some dinner at my place.

Mr. Bill Siksay: I understand what you're saying, Ms. Grewal, but that's not what Mr. Komarnicki was saying. He was saying something else.

The Chair: Okay, let's move on.

Thank you, Ms. Grewal. That's a wonderful suggestion, and we look forward to being at your residence for that.

Next:

That, in relation to its study on the Iraqi Refugees, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration:

Travel to Toronto on Monday, November 19, and;

Invite organizational representatives to appear before the Committee in Ottawa.

The first part of that will be obsolete now that we're spending some extra time in Toronto on that.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, perhaps I may make one recommendation that is food for thought. It depends upon what happens by the end of October, if we have not heard all the witnesses—

The Chair: Leave that one part alone. Leave that alone, in other words.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: What I'm saying, Chair, is by the end of October if we need to go back to hear more people in Toronto, certainly this can stand as it is right now, and if we see that we need more, then we do cover that. I would suggest that we leave it, and at the end of October we can—

The Chair: Okay, that's fine. That seems to make sense to me, given what we've already talked about here with respect to extra time in Toronto.

Mr. Siksay, you had a comment.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Chair, at the planning committee we also looked at that long list of possible witnesses on the Iraqi refugee question. One of the concerns of the planning committee was that we wanted to hear about policy, not individual experiences of problems and individual casework kinds of suggestions. So I hope all members of the standing committee can be clear about that, that rather than hearing from—

The Chair: Yes, we want to hear about policy in that regard, not to bring in your individual cases—

Mr. Bill Siksay: Policy and organization are what we want to give priority to.

The Chair: Okay, that is a suggestion.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, for a lot of the people who will be coming to us and talking about this policy, there is some concern about the treatment they're getting at the posts when they apply. We might want to consider either inviting or hearing them over the phone, as we did with the situation from London, England. We can invite the heads of the posts to phone in, at a convenient time for them, to give us testimony on what they're seeing on the ground, and probably some folks from the UNHCR on this issue.

• (1150)

Mr. Bill Siksay: That's what the second part of the recommendation was meant to deal with, Chair, so maybe we should delete the travel to Toronto part of the recommendation on the back of the page and leave in "Invite organizational—"

The Chair: Okay. "Invite organizational representatives to appear before the Committee in Ottawa." I think that's fine. People would go along with that.

All right? Okay.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Is the recommendation that we leave it in or delete it?

The Chair: It is to delete the first part of it and leave the second part of it there.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, I would recommend that we leave it until the end of October, and if we need to delete it, then we would delete it at that point in time. Let's see how it goes.

The Chair: Andrew.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Have you ever done something where we have a lot of people who want to come, say, on this particular issue, where we could get them to meet and do a round table among themselves before they come to the committee, and then they could give us representative samples as well as policy suggestions?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Okay, but you have an amendment on the table that says we leave this until after our meetings in October.

The Chair: The suggestion from Mr. Siksay was that the first part of this recommendation, to travel to Toronto, Ontario, on Monday, November 19, 2007, be deleted, and that we leave the part about inviting the organizational representatives to appear before the committee. I guess that's because of the extra time we're spending in Toronto talking about these issues.

Can I hear from those who would be in favour of deleting that first part, the travel to Toronto?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Chair, before you do that, I had a recommendation on the table that we leave this alone until after we—

The Chair: Yes, but I had Bill's first.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: No, no. You had mine first.

The Chair: Did I have yours first? No, I don't think so.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I suggested that we leave it alone until we finish in October and then we—

The Chair: Well, okay. We can do both, Jim.

Mr. Bill Siksay: You don't need a motion to leave it alone, Jim. The only motion on the table is to delete something that's already there.

The Chair: Okay.

First of all, let's go to Bill's motion here.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Do we have input on that before we vote?

The Chair: Okay, go ahead.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, there are a lot of people who want to meet with the committee, be it on policy, be it on what they have faced—

The Chair: You're talking about individuals now.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: We had individuals who came in front of this committee when we were hearing the people in Kingston Penitentiary. We travelled to the penitentiary twice. We met with the five or six individuals.

Not giving the people who are refugees and want to meet with this committee the due time, I think, is an injustice to them. While we spend—

The Chair: But Jim, have you seen this?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Yes, I have, Chair. I submitted most of it.

The Chair: We have a list of 140 people. We can't reasonably meet with this many people or throw this open to individuals—

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, when we met with individuals who—

The Chair: You're going to bog down the committee.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: —were in Kingston Penitentiary, individuals whose lives certainly were affected—

•(1155)

Mr. Bill Siksay: How many, Jim?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Do you want to give me some time, Bill?

The Chair: Order.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I was courteous to you.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Take all the time you need.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Thank you.

Chair, I think that giving these individuals.... Certainly the clerk can go through the list of people, and we can have the analysts talk to them and try to weed them out. And certainly we spent over two and a half or three months talking to individuals who were held in Kingston Penitentiary. We met with them twice. That was only for five individuals.

These people want to come. They want to voice their concerns. Not giving these people due justice will certainly not make us look credible.

The Chair: When we go to Toronto with this extra time, we're going to have individuals coming to us there as well. So there's going to be ample opportunity. I just worry about bogging this thing down with 140 or 150 individuals. What makes one more special than the other?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, this is why I recommended that we leave this alone until after the hearings.

Certainly this committee went out of its way to accommodate Mr. Siksay, to go to his Burnaby riding to listen to the concerns of his constituents. These are people who are living—

The Chair: Okay, let me go to Mr. Siksay for a comment here.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Chair, I want to support taking out that reference. We have expanded the opportunities for people to appear before the committee on the question of Iraqi refugee policy by adding it to the list for cities all across the country. I think we can do that. If we need to make another visit to Toronto, we can determine that in the future.

I think we should get on with it. We've expanded the opportunities. We don't need this specific reference in there at this time. If we need to reconsider that, we can do it later.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, I have one question.

The Chair: One more comment, Jim, and that's it.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Does Mr. Siksay suggest we're not interested in listening to the witnesses on the Iraq refugees? Is this what I'm hearing?

The Chair: No, I think what you're hearing is that—

Mr. Bill Siksay: I'd like to respond to that, Chair.

That's not at all what I said. As a matter of fact, I said that we have actually provided for increased possibilities. Because of my amendment in the previous discussion, we're extending the opportunities to hear from people on this subject. In fact we're making them much more extensive than what Mr. Karygiannis originally proposed.

The Chair: I've heard enough now. I'm going to the motion we have on the floor by Mr. Siksay, that we delete the first part of this recommendation to travel to Toronto, Ontario, on Monday, November 19, 2007.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We will invite organizational representatives to appear before the committee in Ottawa. I'm sure there will be plenty of opportunity, Mr. Karygiannis, to hear the various people who should be heard on this. I don't think you'll be deprived in any way.

What else do we have?

I'll make a reminder here that in the fall we also have to deal with Bill C-57, so that's going to be part of our deliberations as well. I think we had some mention made in our subcommittee that we would look at the points system. That could be studied under undocumented workers, so that's going to be done as well. The foreign credentials, of course, came up as being an important topic that we need to get around to.

Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Blair Wilson: If I could also open the floor to discussion, I know we've talked about this a few times before, the possibility of the committee travelling to India and Australia to review the situations in those countries with respect to intake and with respect to the system in place in Australia and how they deal with immigration issues.

The Chair: That has come up before. Mr. Telegdi has brought that up on a couple of different occasions.

Mr. Blair Wilson: If I could open that up for discussion and possibly come up with a date some time in late November to travel there, I think that would be good use of our time. Other committees travel internationally. We deal with probably one of the biggest international components—immigration—and we should be going out to other areas like that.

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, if we're going to be thinking about this, I think we also have to look at the countries where a lot of our immigrants are coming from. Certainly India and Pakistan are two areas we're getting a lot of immigrants from. We do have to go to China. The largest population of people coming into Canada is from China, and not including China is not going to do justice to the immigrants who are coming to Canada.

The Chair: Do we want to open that up for discussion right now or is this something that we will put on the agenda at some point when we come back in the fall to have a look at?

Mr. Telegdi.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: I think we probably should, but I think maybe February would be better than November.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: How about January? We could do it in January when the House is in recess.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: We could take a week when we're not in recess, or take one when we are in recess and then take one when we're not. I think it's important for us to touch there, because we're competing with Australia, so we'd better understand what the competition is. We have the source countries right there. I think February would be—

The Chair: Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Chair, I was just going to suggest that if Mr. Wilson wants to have that kind of discussion, maybe he should make a recommendation or put a motion before the committee, rather than have a general discussion. That might be a more helpful way.

• (1200)

The Chair: Yes, that might be a good idea. When we come back in the fall, or...?

Mr. Blair Wilson: Mr. Chair, I'd like to put a motion now that the committee undertake to travel to India and Australia, and possibly China, during the January break period.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Chair, I believe you need unanimous consent for that, and I would deny that until we have a more careful discussion of it. I just don't think it's appropriate to do that kind of travel without notice and without careful consideration.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Blair Wilson: Do I need unanimous consent to put a motion forward?

The Chair: Without notice, yes.

Okay, it looks like—

Mr. Bill Siksay: I have a few points I'd like to raise, Chair. The first one is that I noticed that as it appears on the committee's

website, in the 19th report of the committee, which deals with the motion on expediting immigration applications in areas where there's civil strife, there's a dissenting opinion, but it's not attributed to anyone. I find that problematic. I think we should know who that dissenting opinion is from. I believe it's from the Conservative members or from the parliamentary secretary, so that needs to be indicated clearly on the website.

The Chair: I guess it would be the dissenting opinion of Conservative members of the committee, would it? Is that how it would be done?

Mr. Bill Siksay: I don't know whose it was.

The Chair: In any event, it was—

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: We'll have a look at it and certainly identify the sources of the report.

Mr. Bill Siksay: That's been tabled in the House already. I think there needs to be some amendment to that, so that it's clear who that dissenting opinion is from. I don't think it serves the committee well to have that stand when it's not indicated who it's from.

The other concern I had, Chair, is this. I want to raise my concern about the difficulty this committee has had in arranging representatives from the department to appear before it on several issues, on the issue of a briefing on Bill C-57 and a briefing on temporary foreign workers and undocumented workers. My understanding is that the clerk has been trying to arrange this for almost a month, I believe. I don't think it's out of line to say it's been that long.

Even today the clerk was asked to try to arrange it for today's meeting, and it still hasn't happened. I don't understand why that would be. It seems to me that if the government is interested in seeing Bill C-57 move ahead, they might have ensured that representatives of the department were prepared to give us that briefing. And I also don't understand why the government wouldn't be prepared to have officials brief us about temporary foreign workers and undocumented workers.

The Chair: Wasn't there some kind of agreement, or did I dream it, that we would not go to Bill C-57 but that we would wait until the fall, so that it would be—

Mr. Bill Siksay: No, Chair. At the agenda and planning committee, we asked the clerk to try to arrange up to four things. We gave him a list of four things: the report that we've just gone over, a briefing on Bill C-57, a briefing on temporary and foreign workers, or a visit from the Minister of Foreign Affairs on issues related to passports and citizenship. I'm very concerned that we've been stonewalled by the department on those briefings. I just want to make my concern about that clear.

The Chair: Mr. Komarnicki and Mr. Telegdi.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: I have a couple of points, and the first is addressing the dissenting report. As I recall it, this committee placed a restriction on the report to make sure it was five words or less, or perhaps not longer than the motion, which really wasn't a report, it was a motion. I always take exception to the fact that we would proceed with motions as reports when they're not reports. But that must be the one that the member is referring to. Certainly we'll undertake to indicate that, even though it might put us outside the word limit.

Having said that, with respect to Bill C-57, there's no question— And I didn't hear from you, Mr. Chair, will it be the first order of business on our agenda when we get back?

The Chair: Yes. It will be one of the orders of business.

The clerk will make the necessary adjustment in the website to indicate that it did indeed come from Mr. Komarnicki.

Mr. Telegdi.

•(1205)

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Just to add to that, I'm really disappointed that the Minister of Public Safety has not seen fit to come forward. We have been inviting him for a long period of time. I guess maybe it expresses his contempt for the committee, and that's really unfortunate. I really do hope that the Conservative members will get on his case to show up before the committee. The whole enforcement thing, the whole issue of enforcement—all sorts of new money has gone into enforcement to get rid of undocumented workers. The whole issue of—

The Chair: Did the minister have some concerns that he couldn't appear before the committee because there was a court case ongoing on the security certificate issue? I think there was some concern there, and I think he communicated that.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: There's no court case anymore, Mr. Chair. There's no court case between the people being held in custody, the one person who was being held in custody...no more court case. So that's not an excuse.

The Chair: That was the point, I think, you made at the time.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: It doesn't exist anymore.

The Chair: Do we have anyone else who wants to speak?

Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: When the minister was in front of us a couple of weeks ago, she mentioned that fact that there's a possibility that lost Canadians will be dealt with in the Citizenship Act coming down the pipeline. I know we did a lot of work on the citizenship and lost Canadians issue. Certainly the parliamentary secretary, Mr. Komarnicki, can give us a heads-up as to when the minister and the department expect to throw this in our laps. We certainly have to give this issue some time, or is the minister going to take the report that we're going to present and go with this report? Is the minister still going to be presenting a new bill?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: The minister has indicated that members will be made aware of the proposed changes in the course of time, when those are put together.

The Chair: Bill C-57 would be one of the first, if not the first, order of business when we resume in the fall.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Chair, I do think we have the lost Canadians, those people whose lives are still going on, for whom we have to provide a clear.... I'm not sure if that's fair to them.

The Chair: That will be at the extra meetings.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Yes, but we do have to provide for the people who appeared before us a clear reference on the work they've done. People are looking to this committee to come up with suggestions. The minister comes in and says she is going to do a new citizenship bill. I'm not sure if that's fair to them.

The Chair: Yes.

The point you're making, analyst, is that the first item of business is the report. In the inside meetings, Bill C-57 would take priority.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Am I hearing, through you, Mr. Chair, to the parliamentary secretary, that we are getting a sense that for the report that this committee will do regarding lost Canadians, the minister, if and when she decides to put the new bill in place, will take those comments that we make in a serious mode and won't just come up and say, "Here's the new act"? Is all the work we've done with these people going to go down the drain?

The Chair: I certainly don't know.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Can I pose the question, through you, to the parliamentary secretary?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Of course we've heard all of Mr. Karygiannis' recommendations, thoughts, suggestions, opinions, and other points of view, and certainly those will be taken into account as well as the testimony of all of the witnesses who have been heard to this point. When the amendments are proposed, the committee obviously will be made aware of them.

The Chair: Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Chair, with regard to the planning for the agenda in the fall, I would be prepared to see an early scheduling of a briefing from the department on Bill C-57. As for further meetings on Bill C-57, I would like to see that matter referred to the planning committee before those meetings are scheduled. I think the planning committee would need to meet early when we return to discuss the specifics of our schedule in the fall. At this point, I'm not prepared to say that Bill C-57 should be the first or our primary work in the fall, especially given the fact that the government has delayed giving us a briefing now, when we could have been working on it this week.

•(1210)

The Chair: The suggestion is that we have a steering committee meeting early in the fall to find out exactly how many meetings, if any, will be scheduled. I'm sure we will have some scheduled. So let's wait until the fall on that and see where we're going on it.

Is there anything else on the agenda?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: I understand the briefing was requested for Thursday of last week, which is very short notice.

The Chair: Yes, a briefing will be given to us.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Having said that, I think it is a government piece of legislation, and the subcommittee should understand that it deserves its attention to schedule appropriate hearings as soon as they're able to.

The Chair: Yes, and we will.

Madame Faille.

[Translation]

Ms. Meili Faille: I would just like to know what happens to the briefing book on undocumented workers. The department was supposed to have send us that three weeks ago.

[English]

The Chair: Can we deal with this first, and then we'll talk about the briefing books and where we are on that?

I think the suggestion is that we wait until fall. We'll have a steering committee meeting. Quite naturally, we'll have briefings on Bill C-57, and we'll have a steering committee meeting to determine the number of meetings and witnesses who might be called in that regard. That's the suggestion, and I think it's a good one.

All in favour of that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Did you have something else?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I do have something, Mr. Chair. I'm—

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, we didn't get a response to Madame Faille's question about the briefing books.

The Chair: That's a separate issue. I said we'll get back to that. Okay?

Mr. Bill Siksay: But before we go on to something new, can we have an answer on that?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Madame Faille's questions seem to get put off all the time in committee, Chair, and I insist on a response to her question before we move on to another topic.

The Chair: I'm sure we will, but Mr. Karygiannis has the floor for a question.

Was it with relation to the briefing books?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I will wait until you give us an answer to that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: What's the specific question? Perhaps you could refer what you're—

The Chair: The briefing books.

Madame Faille.

[Translation]

Ms. Meili Faille: We had planned a meeting on the issue of undocumented workers. We had a discussion at the committee, and it was decided that the department would prepare a document setting out the statistics on what has happened in recent decades in the case of undocumented workers, what the budgets were, and so on. This document was supposed to give us data and summarize the issue for us. Some departmental officials were supposed to come to a briefing meeting. The meeting was cancelled, but in any case the department was supposed to prepare a briefing book for us with all of these details. We are still waiting. We agreed to cancel the meeting, provided the briefing book would be sent to us. We have been waiting for it for three weeks.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, I think the clerk has some information that he can give you, Madame Faille.

The Clerk: As Madame Faille mentioned, CIC and other departmental officials were invited to present on undocumented and temporary foreign workers on May 31. As you know, the meeting was cancelled.

On Thursday, after our steering committee meeting, I requested that the officials be reinvited to appear today—however, they declined—and if they could not appear, that they provide their prepared presentations, including all the detailed statistics regarding the issue.

I was informed that no document has been prepared.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: I don't recall a request being made for briefing books. It's news to me.

The Chair: Madame Faille.

[Translation]

Ms. Meili Faille: I spoke about this very specifically. And, as you know, this was not the first time. Every time I have the floor, I ask for more detailed information, because when the departmental officials come, they often bring more general statistics. We specifically asked that they come to provide us with information and to prepare a non-partisan document. We wanted a summary of the issue of undocumented workers since the time of the last amnesty, about 10 years ago. We wanted to know what programs were implemented earlier, what the statistics were, and how much money had been set aside to deal with this issue, so that we could have a detailed discussion with the departmental officials. This is not the first time. This time, you called me at my office to cancel the meeting, and I agree to that, provided we got a briefing book.

● (1215)

[English]

The Chair: Yes, and you asked for a briefing document to be prepared. I recall it completely.

[Translation]

Ms. Meili Faille: We have been waiting for three weeks. I mentioned this two meetings ago. I do not understand why the department has still not prepared this briefing book for us.

[English]

The Chair: Is there any particular problem with officials preparing some kind of briefing document on that?

Jim is first.

Is there problem that you're aware of, Mr. Clerk?

The Clerk: No.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, I would ask that through you, we instruct the department, before we leave and this House shuts down, since the folks from the department were ready to come to us on May 31. They certainly had outlines, briefings, and material that they were going to leave with us. I would ask, through you, that we get these briefings before we leave on Friday.

The Chair: Let's get these briefing documents—

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: These briefing documents, and that the department be—

The Chair: They've already informed us that they don't have a briefing document.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, I think I have the floor.

We ask the department to give us briefing books, complete from A to Z, on history, previous amnesties, the economy that the undocumented workers are impacting, as well as what the department's views are on this issue and also CBSA. I don't think this is very much to ask. We should have these documents by Friday before we leave.

The Chair: I don't know if that's possible, but we should certainly request that we have briefing documents.

Andrew.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Complete briefing documents, Chair.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Chair, when I was in the chair and I was having some people coming to the committee to testify, I essentially told the clerk to tell the people that if they chose not to show, then we could subpoena them. I think getting this from the officials, that they feel they can ignore the request of this committee, sets a bad precedent. When I was in the chair and my own party was in power at the time, when we had reluctance from the officials, I told Bill to tell them that if they didn't come, we'd subpoena them. If that's the way they want to play with this committee, then I think that's the appropriate response.

The Chair: I think we have to get back to the officials again and find out what's happened here, that we can't have this kind of briefing document. I'm sure it wouldn't involve too much research outside of what they already have on hand.

Mr. Komarnicki.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: It seems to me that the clerk should probably identify what the request was and what the agreement was precisely, because there's a lot of discussion about what it is, what a briefing book is or isn't, and what it may or may not have meant. There obviously would be a precise question somewhere and a precise response. We should identify what that was and ask that the information be provided within a reasonable period of time. I don't think it would be necessary before we leave here, but we should find out specifically what was said and agreed to.

My sense is that it's not what we're talking about here today. I'm usually not that far wrong from what I recollect. I think we should first find out what it was. Specifically I'd ask the clerk to identify it precisely and then request that whatever was agreed to be provided in the course of time, within a reasonable period of time.

The Chair: The clerk informs me that the request went in roughly three weeks ago. May 31 was the date on which the meeting was supposed to occur, but didn't occur, and shortly after that the request went in.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Was the request based on what was said and agreed to here in committee, and do we have a record of that?

• (1220)

The Clerk: I can specify that—

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Chair, do we have a speakers list?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: I'm still speaking and I haven't finished. I want to be heard on this.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Do we have a record of what was requested and what was agreed to or not? If we do, I'd like it provided, because that's what needs to be complied with. Do we have it?

The Chair: That's reasonable. Did we have an official request go in?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Not an official request, but what was said in the committee.

The Chair: Can you hold on for a minute until I finish with what Mr. Komarnicki is saying?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: On that, what he's saying specifically—

The Chair: Just hold on one moment, please. I can't entertain four or five different people at the same time. I'm trying to deal with Mr. Komarnicki. I think I've been fairly lenient in getting everyone on the list here, so please be patient for a moment, would you, until I get Mr. Komarnicki's point dealt with.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: On that point, chair—

The Chair: I'm not prepared to deal with that point until I'm finished dealing with Mr. Komarnicki and the clerk. Then I will go to you, if you don't mind.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, can you tell us why the meeting of the—

The Chair: That is not a point of order.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Yes, it is. I need to have clarification on why the meeting was dissolved.

The Chair: You will get clarification after I deal with Mr. Komarnicki and the clerk. Then I will go to you. Please exercise a little patience here.

The question again is, was there an official request made?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: In the committee, and what was the undertaking or response? There would obviously be a transcript or something saying what the request was and what the agreement to provide was. I'd like to know what that is, because that's what should be provided. I realize a request was made of some kind. However, do we have what was specifically requested and what the undertaking was? That is what I'd like to identify.

The Chair: Do you have that information, Mr. Clerk?

The Clerk: On the first point about a specific statement made in committee, I do not have the exact date or the meeting number when that was requested. I do recall Madame Faille requesting detailed statistics including the history of the issue.

The Chair: So Madame Faille requested the statistics. Did she make that request here in the committee?

The Clerk: That's what I believe. I can research to find the exact meeting where that was stated.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: What was requested, what was agreed to be provided—that's the response we would want.

The Clerk: Secondly, I believe I had sent an e-mail. With all witnesses, we request that they provide something in writing in advance, such as a briefing note.

The Chair: And that went to departmental officials?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: That's not my question. Let's not get off my question.

The Clerk: To clarify that, I recall specifying that committee members would like to have more detailed statistics on the history of the issue.

The Chair: Was there any reply from—

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: I appreciate what you may have requested and what you said, and I'm not taking away from that, but I'm asking specifically, what was the request by the member?

The Chair: Order.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: On a point of order, Chair, this is not a monologue between you and Mr. Komarnicki. Mr. Komarnicki put a question down. Let the clerk answer and let's move on here.

The Chair: Order, please. There is no point of order.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: We're in the process of discussion, if you don't mind.

Mr. Blair Wilson: It's not a conversation.

The Chair: Order.

Mr. Dave Batters: We should have had food again.

The Chair: There's no need for this meeting to deteriorate to this point. I'm just trying to get some information from the clerk here.

Did the departmental officials ever get back to us, stating that they had the request and why they had not complied with the request?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: As a point of clarification, Chair, the departmental officials were ready to come to this committee on May 31. For whatever reason, this meeting was cancelled. Be it that you pulled the plug on it or we all pulled the plug on it, they didn't come here. The fact that the departmental officials were ready to come to this committee and spend two hours to brief us and give us information means that they had briefing books ready, they had their notes ready, they had their statistics ready, and they were ready to come and tell us. Therefore, somewhere in the department, there were departmental officials who had spent a lot of time putting all this stuff together, putting all their statistics together.

So today, to get any rhetoric that this is not available certainly is not something that flies. If somebody were to put in a freedom of information request, I'm sure Mr. Komarnicki would have egg on his face.

The Chair: Order, please.

What I'm trying to determine here is, for Madame Faille's information and for the committee's information, whether or not we have this briefing material available to us and whether the officials had responded in any way that they had any materials that we—

• (1225)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: They were prepared to come to the committee.

The Chair: Would you please hang on, Mr. Karygiannis, and stop interrupting on so many occasions here? We're trying to get some information from the clerk to give to Madame Faille.

Do you have any additional information?

The Clerk: Not at this point in time.

The Chair: So I guess what we're saying is that we want you to get back to the officials once again and reiterate the concerns of this committee and that we are requesting this information, demanding this information that they should have had available at the time the meeting got cancelled, and if there are any problems with making that information available to us now.... The committee is looking for it. The committee wants it, hopefully to have it over the summer months to study, and what have you.

Does that accurately reflect the wishes of the committee? Okay.

Madame Faille.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faille: I didn't want to quarrel about it. I'm talking about statistics from the past regarding the issue we will be discussing in the fall. The department should be ready. We could perhaps give it two weeks. I would like to have the material before July or August, because I'm going to be working on this particular topic over the summer.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're going to attempt to get that information for you, Madame Faille. We're directing the clerk to do just that.

Are there any further points to be made on this? Mr. Komarnicki.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Just the point that I made to the clerk, to identify what was requested and what was agreed to, so we know precisely what that was.

The Chair: I think we've given the clerk direction on this. I think the clerk knows what he has to do. I think Madame Faille is satisfied. So that's the end of that.

Is there any further business, new business?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, I think we should give our colleague Mr. Telegdi a minute or two to reflect on himself. Today marks his fiftieth anniversary of being in Canada, as a refugee or an individual who came in during the turmoil times of Hungary. I think we should give him a minute or two to say what Canada has meant to him, as well as what this committee has done for him.

The Chair: I'm certainly in favour of that. Are we all in favour of giving Mr. Telegdi a couple of minutes to do just that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Mr. Telegdi.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: As I've said before and as I've said often enough, immigration has been, is, and will continue to be the lifeblood of Canada. Certainly we're involved in a committee and in a department that have both helped build this country and will continue to do so.

The real significance of the Hungarian exodus being handled by Canada was that Canada was never as generous to anybody as they were in 1956, following the 1956 revolution. There were various reasons for it. The main one—considered black and white—was that you had the Soviet communist state versus a small country such as Hungary. But the drive to make the politicians act really came from the public opinion of the day. It really did. It came from the people, from Canadians themselves, reaching out. To some extent, there was competition between the federal and provincial governments, particularly the federal government and the Ontario government, on how they could do more.

The really nice thing about it is that in many ways it paved the way for the other refugee movements—the boat people, the refugees from Africa, from Bosnia-Herzegovina—and really put Canada at the forefront.

I often think how fortunate my family was to end up in this country. I sort of wonder if, in today's climate.... If I want to look at a country that resembles Hungary and resembles the circumstance we dealt with, it would be the Russian suppression of Chechnya right now. It's safe to say that the Chechens aren't getting anything like the reception we got.

Overall, then, it was a very good experience for the Hungarians, and it was a very good experience for, I think, the whole process of how we deal with refugees in Canada.

When I get passionate about the workings of the committee, as I tend to do, I guess I do so because I knew oppression. I knew what oppression meant. I knew what it was to be reported on at any time by the secret police and hauled in front of officials. If you were lucky, it was your school officials. If you were unlucky, it would be down in the jails. There is a jail in Hungary that still stands—very close to the Canadian embassy—where most of the torture used to go on. Torture was a very regular occurrence.

If you ever get a chance to go to Budapest, I invite you to visit the terror museum. They have a uniform there, a flip-side uniform, if you will. On one side you have the Nazi uniform and on the other side you have the Soviet uniform. It's quite a museum. It just shows you that it really doesn't make much difference if it's communist terror or fascist terror. It gives the history of oppression in the country.

So when I get excited about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, I do it because I think it's so fundamental to us. When I was going through the determination of trying to decide which way to go after 9/11, at the end of the day I had to remember where I came from. I had to remember that the most efficient instrument of terror has always been, and will continue to be, the state. Those are things that we all have to stand on guard for.

•(1230)

As we go into the summer recess, let me recommend a couple of books you might want to read.

One is *Refugee Sandwich*, by Peter Showler. It will really give you an understanding of why we need a refugee appeal division.

Another is *War Brides*, by Melynda Jarratt. It was just released a couple of days ago.

Another important one is *Voices of the Left Behind*. This is something we haven't even touched on. One of the people who visited me in my office on Friday discovered her father 11 years ago. He lives in Cambridge. She was an illegitimate child left behind in Holland. She reunited with her father 11 years ago, and it was very fortunate for her father that she did that, because she was the only one he really had left.

Somehow we have to deal with some of those issues as well.

I hope you get a chance to read that stuff. I hope you get to reflect on what's happening in Chechnya, because the oppression is horrible. It's not dissimilar to what happened to the Hungarians, but in our case, because of lucky circumstances and the split between the east and the west, we probably got the Cadillac treatment.

All in all, we live in a great country. I think we can be very proud of the way we reflect the world and how we interrelate and model ourselves. I think we have a real opportunity to help the rest of the world, particularly the countries that are badly off, get into the same kind of situation as we are in.

Those are all of my comments.

I'm sorry that all of you guys have to be here. I'm very pleased—

The Chair: No, no. I'm sure the committee would want to congratulate you, Andrew, on that milestone. Fifty years is very significant. Obviously you're very proud of your citizenship here in this country. You've made a great contribution to the country. Not only through this committee but through the House of Commons generally, you've made a great contribution, and it's our good fortune to have you as a member of the committee and as a citizen of the country. We congratulate you.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Did I see a final hand going up somewhere, or should we call this meeting to an end?

I want to thank all of you for your great work on the committee over the last year. Hopefully we'll all have a chance to unwind and get the sharp edges off our personalities and all the rest of it during the summer by having a few barbecues here and there.

If I've been sharp today at times, I apologize to the committee.

•(1235)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: You're forgiven.

The Chair: That's great. We're all going with a good attitude. Hopefully we'll see each other in the fall and continue the very good work we are doing.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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