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## Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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**Tuesday, September 26, 2006**

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**Chair**

Mr. Gerald Keddy

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## Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

Tuesday, September 26, 2006

• (1110)

[Translation]

**The Clerk:** Good morning. Pursuant to the standing orders, I will now proceed with the election of a chair and of two vice-chairs, starting with the election of the chair.

[English]

I'm ready to receive motions to that effect.

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** I would like to nominate Mr. Keddy. I know that will surprise honourable members.

**The Clerk:** It is moved by Mr. Lunney that Mr. Keddy be elected the chair. Are there other nominations?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare Mr. Keddy duly elected chair of the committee.

I'm going to proceed for the first vice-chair. The candidate should come from the official opposition.

It is moved by Mr. Blais...?

[Translation]

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** I nominate Mr. Bill Matthews.

**The Clerk:** It is moved by Mr. Blais.

[English]

that Mr. Matthews be elected vice-chair. Are there other nominations?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare Mr. Matthews duly elected.

[Translation]

I will now proceed with the election of the second vice-chair. I am ready to receive motions to that effect.

Mr. Matthews.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Matthews (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** I move Mr. Blais be the other vice-chair.

[Translation]

**The Clerk:** It is moved by Mr. Matthews that Mr. Blais be elected vice-chair of the committee.

Are there other nominations?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare Mr. Blais elected vice-chair.

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC)):** Mr. Matthews had a point of order.

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** Congratulations first, Mr. Chairman, on your re-election as chair. I'm delighted we didn't have a contest, because I was going to have to question whether a member of the committee can vote without a tie.

**An hon. member:** In case there was a tie. Or in the case of a tie.

**Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC):** As one Newfoundlander would say to another, we can't put it in words.

**The Chair:** I'm not sure that's a point of order, but we'll proceed. I appreciate the support of the committee as chair and congratulate our vice-chairs. Now we can get back to the business of the day.

We have a couple of issues we should discuss this morning. We discussed some potential agenda items yesterday—François, Richard, and I. Anyone else who has anything to bring to the table today can do so, but potential items would be.... We have the wrong month there. We still need September.

For the Thursday meeting, we slotted the minister in.

**The Clerk:** I'm still waiting for a reply.

**The Chair:** Would the parliamentary secretary be able to enlighten us on this somewhat?

**Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC):** No. I assumed he was coming, but I haven't heard anything.

**The Chair:** We're still hoping the minister will be here on Thursday, September 28. On the Tuesday of next week we will look at the Canadian Coast Guard appointment of Monsieur Da Pont.

Mr. Kamp.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but I just heard we thought the minister would be available from 12 to 1 o'clock on Thursday, so you may have the first hour.

**The Chair:** Okay, that being the case, we'll try to slot something in for the first hour, but that's short notice, so we may only have a meeting from 12 to 1 o'clock, unless there's another item of business.

The new coast guard appointment, Mr. Da Pont, on Tuesday, would be two hours—or the Belledune incinerator, whichever we can get. And if we get one on one day, we would take the next day for the other. So if we get Mr. Da Pont on Tuesday, we'd do the incinerator on Thursday of next week.

On October 17, we would have the—

• (1115)

**Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC):** Chairman, what's the issue on the appointment of the commissioner? He's newly appointed, right?

**The Chair:** Newly appointed. I thought it would be a good idea for the committee to be able to interview him, to hear his views on where we're headed with the Canadian Coast Guard. It's an item on all three coasts, and the budget and....

Mr. Kamp.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** Is there no chance he could come in the first hour on Tuesday?

**The Chair:** First hour on Tuesday? And before the minister? Possibly. It's short notice, but I'd—

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** The minister's coming next Tuesday, is that right?

**The Chair:** Thursday.

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** Thursday of this week?

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** Is there any chance Mr. Da Pont could come before the minister and we could get it all over in one day?

**The Chair:** The issue was to try to get a schedule in place, and we weren't guaranteed the outcome of this meeting, but we wanted to have a schedule in place, whoever the chair was.

It's short notice. If we could get him before the minister, absolutely. We'll try to do that, but....

**Mr. John Cummins:** Mr. Chairman, if the minister comes on Thursday and you've only got an hour.... How long does it take to do the questioning, so all members get their questions? That's almost an hour, isn't it?

**The Chair:** About 45 minutes, yes.

**Mr. John Cummins:** Because you're going to have to back up on the questions, and let him know the opening address is going to be limited, so you can get at least one round of questioning.

**The Chair:** For the opening address, we'll ask him to be brief.

**Mr. John Cummins:** No, give him a time limit. You want to make sure all the members have a chance to ask a question.

**The Chair:** Yes. I would assume no more than 10 minutes, but probably could do it in less.

**Mr. John Cummins:** You have to back up, do your math, and figure out how long it takes to do a round, and back up from that, and that's what he gets in time.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, we will do that and that will judge the—

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** Mr. Chairman, may I speak to this issue?

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Matthews.

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** We should request that the minister come for more than an hour. The minister hasn't been here yet. And Mr. Cummins is right, an hour will go by and we really won't do justice with the minister with the few issues we all want to do justice to. So I think we'd be better off waiting. If the minister can only afford us an hour, from 12 to 1 o'clock on Thursday, I would prefer, and suggest, that we wait until the minister can find a slot and come in and give us

a couple of hours—because when are we going to see the minister again if he comes in for an hour on Thursday?

We'd better do some other business and wait for the minister to give us a couple of hours, or the best part of two hours, whichever we need.

**The Chair:** Simply because of the way the schedule was put together on rather short notice, we could slot him in for an hour. We'll ask for two. If the minister can only come for an hour, we might want to think about taking him for an hour and requesting he come back.

Mr. MacAulay.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.):** I would agree we need to have him for at least an hour and a half to two hours. The problem is that you always have an opening statement, and it just gives the committee.... The minister cannot give us two hours. That's understandable, because he's tied up. But we've waited a long time, so if it took another week or two weeks.... Probably even next week he could come for an hour and a half or two hours.

I would strongly urge we not take him for the hour.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kamp.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** I know the minister is eager to come. Because we gave him fairly short notice for this, there was a scheduling conflict for the other hour. But we are going to get him for estimates, right—

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** —and that's going to be coming up fairly soon as well, where we'll get him for two hours or more for estimates, I assume—or more. So I think we should have him here for what we can get, and then have him back for estimates, and continue on then with those other issues we want to raise.

**The Chair:** If we have him slotted for a two-hour timeframe at the estimates, an hour previous to that gives us three. I mean, it's the will of the committee at the end of the day. I don't want to miss this slot, and it may be difficult to fit someone else in there on short notice. Today is September 26; this is Thursday's meeting.

Is there any more discussion?

• (1120)

**Mr. John Cummins:** Is there a motion on the floor?

**The Chair:** Well, there is no motion, but—

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** I move that we wait until the minister can give us at least an hour and a half of his time within the next two or three weeks before we have him before committee.

**The Chair:** Next is Mr. Lunney, on the motion.

**Mr. James Lunney:** When are we expecting to get into discussion of main estimates?

**The Chair:** We have it in here right now as September 21, after the Remembrance Day break.

**Mr. James Lunney:** That's November 21.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. James Lunney:** Colleagues, we would end up with an hour now, and then two hours coming up in November. If you delay, who knows? It may be well after the October break, which is only a week away, before we get him back here for two hours.

**The Chair:** We have confirmation, I believe, from Mr. Da Pont. Do we have him confirmed? He is not confirmed.

Belledune—we expect to be able to fit them in next week. We have confirmation from the Cheam Band. We know that we can get a briefing on boat safety, we expect, from DFO simply by asking. Again, we have the members of the department on either Belledune, if we can't fit in earlier, or on the Fraser salmon fishery and the integrated fisheries management plan. I think that was for groundfish, actually.

**Mr. Fabian Manning:** If we go until 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, that would give us an hour and a half.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Blais is next.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raynald Blais:** As far as this motion is concerned, I would like to say that I consider the presence of the minister to be very important, given that we have several subjects we would like to discuss with him. I am under the impression that the discussion we will have with the minister over two hours will allow us to tackle several subjects other than those concerning the estimates. It is true, when we talk about certain issues, that we always end up talking about money, but I feel that it would be much more appropriate to first of all welcome the minister, so that we can get an overview with him of all the issues, and find out what his opinion and vision of these things are, because we are interested in several subjects.

As far as the estimates are concerned, we have to plan to have two to other hours. I do not think it would be overdoing it to spend four hours with the minister to discuss the estimates and to talk about all of the issues of interest to us.

I therefore support Mr. MacAuley's motion.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** John, you're not lost for words. I know you're not.

**Mr. John Cummins:** On another issue, Mr. Chairman, while we're waiting, I understand that DFO has prepared a report on the general issue with the Cheam. Would the committee be able to get a copy of that report before the Cheam appear? It might be interesting.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** Do you mean on the gravel?

**Mr. John Cummins:** I think it's on the general issues relating to the Cheam Band. That's the information we have from someone who saw the first draft and was asked to redo it. I'm just wondering if we would be able to get that report before we ask our questions.

**The Chair:** I'm not aware of it, but we can certainly ask whether a report has been done. If it's in a finished form, we would request it for committee members prior to the meeting.

• (1125)

**Mr. John Cummins:** Well, apparently it's been done. One fellow reviewed the draft, so we can act as though it's done and ask for it.

**The Chair:** Yes. There's no problem asking for it. At worst they can say no.

We tried to slot the minister in for longer than the hour. That means we don't have anything slotted in for Thursday yet. We will try to put something in for Thursday. But apparently the minister would be available for two hours on October 19.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** That would be good. Let's accept that, quickly.

**The Chair:** Well, we still have a motion on the floor. Do you want to withdraw the motion?

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** I'll withdraw the motion and indicate I know how interested the minister would be in being here for two hours.

(Motion withdrawn)

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** I imagine he'd like to be here for three hours, knowing how ministers feel.

**The Chair:** As an unbiased chair and recognizing the difficulty of having former ministers even appear at estimates, I was quite impressed that the minister offered to come, so I appreciate the fact that he would spend two hours here.

Does anyone have any recommendations, then, for Thursday? Right now Thursday's open.

**Mr. John Cummins:** We'll leave that in your capable hands, Chairman.

**The Chair:** Well, we will try. We have an agenda; everybody's aware of it. We will try to fill that agenda and have someone come in on Thursday.

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** Wonderful. And if you're unable to do that, I'm sure that most of the committee would understand.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Matthews, for that.

**An hon. member:** You can read between the lines.

**The Chair:** Yes, I can.

The other thing is that we have had some discussions on boat stability. We might be able to get someone from the department in on an item like that. That would fit in for Thursday, because they could come on shorter notice.

The other issue is that I've asked the clerk to put together a schedule for potential travel to the east coast. Again, I urge all members to speak directly to their whips. I will tell you that I spoke to the government whip, and he wasn't fussy about the idea of travel while the House is sitting.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** That's one way of putting it, I guess.

**The Chair:** I think it's important that we finish this east coast travel in particular, on the seal hunt. It's not working for most members to travel during the break week, so I say we put a reasonable package together and ask for travel during a sitting week. As long as we have enough members from both sides that we're in balance, I'm willing to take that to the whip and the House leaders and wherever I have to take it to try to get concurrence and the ability to travel. If we can't, we can't.

Right now, the week we're looking at would be the week of November 6 to 10. I know everyone wants to be home for Remembrance Day, but that would put us back in our ridings on the evening of November 10.

Does anybody have difficulty with that? We'll try to put a balanced group together so that there's no advantage to anyone in the House. We'll appeal to the common sense and goodwill of our House officers.

•(1130)

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** Are we going to go to each province?

**The Chair:** What we've looked at is Newfoundland, the Magdalen Islands, and one stop probably in southwest Nova Scotia for grey seals. At the same time, we were going to try to do some interviews on boat length and boat stability.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** On that issue and on the seal hunt itself, it affects Prince Edward Island. I know it's a small area, but it is a problem. I think it's only fair that we go there for at least half a day and have a hearing there, because it does affect a lot of fishermen. You talked about boat length; that's always a concern there too, but what's going on with the seal hunt and how it's handled certainly has a major effect on our fishermen now, to the extent that a lot of them are not fishing.

**The Chair:** I respect that. The issue is to try to get a.... We'll look at it again.

There are two issues with seals. One issue is the harp and the hooded seal and the other issue is the grey seal. The grey seal is predominantly a problem in southwest Nova Scotia. They're coming in off Sable and that entire area. They're found out past 100 miles now in the open ocean.

The other issue with the grey seal is that they've adapted. At one time you could set gear at 80 feet and you just didn't get any predation by the grey seals. Now they're diving deeper. They're diving down to 100 feet. They've figured out where the food is and how to get it.

Anyway, Mr. MacAulay, we'll look at that. I don't know if we can promise, simply because of the shortness of the trip, that we'll have time. We are looking at trying to go to as many places as we can.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** I certainly hope you can, but if you can't, I hope you will at least take a group in from there.

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** But I don't want that. I want—

**Mr. John Cummins:** The first thing is that you have to get the whip's okay to get out of here, so—

**The Chair:** Yes, and that is going to be—

**Mr. John Cummins:** When you get there, then we'll worry about the agenda.

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:** John, you don't sound optimistic. I think we should discuss more here, John.

**Mr. John Cummins:** I don't think it's going to happen.

**The Chair:** No, and I don't want to put the clerk or our researchers, François or Richard, to a lot of work trying to organize events that end up being vetoed. We're trying to put this together; we're trying to get as much out of it as we can. If not, we will have to try to bring people to Ottawa and work from here.

Just a second, Mr. Matthews; Mr. Lunney had his hand up, and I didn't recognize him earlier.

I'm sorry, Mr. Lunney.

**Mr. James Lunney:** There's no problem. I just wanted to ask about the agenda. You're talking about getting back for November 11. Where would November 10 put us finishing up, then?

November 11 is actually a Saturday, isn't it? For those of us who have to get to the other end of the country, there's travel time involved.

**The Chair:** Where are we on the 10th?

If worse comes to worst and you have to travel, you can leave early.

**Mr. John Cummins:** Where are you on the 10th?

**The Chair:** I don't know.

Right now we're scheduled, Richard says, to be in Nova Scotia on November 10, so that would be a direct flight out of Halifax. It might actually be quicker to catch a Halifax flight than trying to get one out of, say, the Magdalens or Newfoundland.

Mr. Matthews is next.

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** I have a comment on the difficulty with the whips. They are probably all difficult, but it sounds as though your whip is the most difficult one, because he's the government whip. What if we gave an assurance that more opposition members would be travelling than government members?

•(1135)

**The Chair:** I think we may have to do something like that.

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** If that's what they're worried about.... I don't know why they're worried, because no one wants to defeat the government at this point in time. But if we gave them that assurance, then the government wouldn't fall because the fisheries committee was travelling, if there were more of us away than of you.

**The Chair:** Yes, even if it's in balance, that's all. No one said, Mr. Matthews, that this decision was based on reason.

**Mr. Bill Matthews:** No, I didn't think it was. If it was, it would be the first one in the ten years since I've been here.

**The Chair:** We will arrange for a meeting on Thursday. Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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