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Chair

Mr. James Rajotte

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC)): We'll call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology to order. Pursuant to the committee's order of Tuesday, October 24, 2006, we are resuming a debate on the motion of Mr. Crête.

I've been asked to read the motion for the benefit of the members. The motion is that

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology recommends that the government impose a moratorium on implementing instructions respecting telecommunications policies recommended to the CRTC to allow the Committee to hear more witnesses in order to make a more thorough study and subsequently present a report to the House on the impact of the deregulation, and that the adoption of this motion be presented to the House of Commons as soon as possible.

We would then be discussing first of all the amendment of Mr. Lapierre, that the motion be amended by adding the words “no later than March 1, 2007” after the word “deregulation”. We will be resuming the debate on the amendment.

I just want to say, perhaps as helpful guidance from the chair, that I understand there's been some consultation amongst members and I think that's a very good thing. We have a very substantive motion and amendment before us. Also, the directive to the CRTC by the industry minister is, I think, very substantive. One can agree or disagree, but these are measures of substance. They certainly impact the governance through the CRTC and would have a great impact on the telecommunications industry. That is why we were not coming to a consensus on Tuesday.

I think it is good that we're having a session to debate and discuss this. I just want to say that in the future, members, if we want to bring substantive motions and amendments forward, which it is of course the right of members to do, I would encourage members to seek consensus across party lines and perhaps make members of other parties as aware of something as possible. As the chair, I would certainly appreciate that.

My understanding was that the telecommunications hearings we were going to have would be for one day and that they would be mainly an information session. I have to admit, that is the sort of directive I conveyed to those who are appearing before us. That was my understanding of what the day of hearings was for.

But we have had a motion presented to us, and an amendment, so we will debate them. I would just encourage members to get their position on the record, and I'd like to see every party. I understand

there is some discussion, so there may or may not be a consensus here. I hope there is.

Who wants to start off the debate on the amendment? We are debating the amendment of Mr. Lapierre. Does anyone want to debate this, or shall I call the question on the amendment? I should call the question?

Do members want a recorded vote? We'll have a recorded vote.

The vote is on the amendment: that the motion be amended by adding the words “no later than March 1, 2007” after the word “deregulation”.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: Now we move to discussion on the motion as amended. Is there anyone who would like to lead off the debate?

Mr. Carrie?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): I'd like to put this on the record. I'd really like to know—we had some discussions before committee—what Mr. Crête's intent is with the motion, if he could talk about it on the record. We would like to hopefully keep the study in committee, if the issue is that we want to hear more witnesses. I foresee, if we report it to the House, that we're going to end up debating a concurrence motion for three hours before we even hear any more witnesses. It seems to be a redundant position. Why bother tying up the House for three hours if the main issue is wanting to hear more witnesses?

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): There are two parts to the motion. The first part ends after the proposed Liberal amendment to add the words “no later than March 1, 2007”. The purpose of the motion, from beginning to end, is simply to clarify that following the day-long hearing, we realized that we would need more time to study the instructions issued by the minister and to report to the House no later than March 1, 2007.

The second part of the motion, namely the words “[...] and that the adoption of this motion be presented to the House of Commons as soon as possible” is more or less a routine motion. We want the House to know that this motion was adopted by the committee. We also want the government to be aware of this, given the order to be issued after November 3rd or 4th. The government could decide that from political standpoint, it might be preferable to await the tabling of our report, scheduled for no later than March 1, 2007, before taking a definitive stand.

• (1540)

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, our members are somewhat concerned about this. If I understand correctly, the problem is the November 4 date. Unless this committee maintains otherwise, the government could unquestionably see this as competition. Given the serious nature of the situation, I think the March 1, 2007 date which we discussed and agreed to in a vote, is a compromise that will allow us to cover the whole question of the manufacturing sector. We could also set aside two or three weeks at a later date to examine this question.

As I understand it, the motion now on the table merely calls upon the minister not to make a decision on November 4, but rather to wait for the committee to table its report. That is totally acceptable, given that this is in the public interest. A few witnesses maintained that the government's telecommunications policy could conceivably violate the provisions of the Telecommunications Act. Therefore, Parliament may well have to make an amendment at the minister's request.

[English]

So the concerns we have are only preliminary, but they are concerns that would require this committee to look a little harder. We should not hold back on decisions that are made, but rather give light to the fact that the committee ought to spend a bit more time subject to the finishing of its study on manufacturing, which is why the March 1 proposal was made.

When we first proposed this, I said one day should do it. But I had no idea that the Bloc and other parties would have similar concerns arising from it.

I understand the concern that you've raised, Mr. Chair. I'm sympathetic to it and I can tell you there was no malice aforesaid, no trying to make this more than what it was. But considering the grave implications of not looking at this, and the possibility that the minister's directive may be in contravention of the Telecommunications Act, I think it's incumbent on this committee and on Parliament to make sure that the appropriate legislation is in place and amended accordingly. So for that reason, I think that if there's time we would like to see this go.

Mr. Chair, I understand that the parliamentary secretary has been kind enough to offer something of an amendment in the English version. It affects the last two sentences beginning after the word "deregulation". This would be after March 2007, now that we've passed it. It suggests that the adoption of this motion be presented to the House of Commons as soon as possible. I think there was a suggestion that this be removed entirely.

The practical effect would be—and this is not for debate but just to signal—that not reporting it to the House would suggest to the government and to Parliament that the committee doesn't care. I'm wondering if we can work on those words. I know that I left the parliamentary secretary with an opportunity to discuss with his colleagues how we might be able to work it around. I'm suggesting that we remove reference to the word "adoption". We then have "that this motion be reported to the House of Commons as soon as possible". I don't know if that helps the parliamentary secretary.

The Chair: I have Monsieur Crête next. If anyone else would like to speak, please notify me.

Monsieur Crête.

• (1545)

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: I just want to finish what I was saying to Mr. Carrie.

We're not about to decide today, with the adoption of the motion, whether or not to have a three-hour debate in the House of Commons. That decision will be made later by the political parties if one of them asks that the report be concurred in. Adopting the motion won't automatically result in a three-hour debate.

Need I remind members that when our first report on the manufacturing sector was tabled, there was no three-hour debate. There could have been one and there could possibly be one this time, if such a request is made. The principle will apply if this motion is adopted. The committee will report to the House and if one of the parties wants a three-hour debate, then there will be no avoiding one. However, if no one asks, then it won't happen.

[English]

The Chair: On the speaking list here I have Mr. Masse, Mr. Shipley, Monsieur Arthur.

Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Briefly, I think it's important to recognize that when we had the witnesses before us, they all identified that there needed to be some changes to the Telecommunications Act and some new direction, and I think we all recognize that. However, there seems to be a lot at stake in terms of what those changes could be. We haven't really seen an expressed position from the minister, so for that reason and because we don't have any legislation before this committee, I think this is a very reasonable request and is something we can actually do.

Setting a date as well I think is a reasonable assurance to the government that we're actually going to follow through with a deadline. The expectation is there for the committee, but with no legislation tabled with this committee, and given that we want to focus on the manufacturing and we can seemingly fall into this with a deadline in the winter session, I think it's something we can actually do something very positive about.

Once again, there are so many different positions out there about what to do and how far to go, I think it would be worthwhile to finish the job. I think everybody recognizes that there need to be some changes, and I think we can do that through this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Masse.

Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate all the comments and I appreciate the chair and people working together on this. I'd simply raise the concern that I've raised before.

We started this back in April, I guess, and we looked at what we wanted to prioritize at that time. Telecommunications was on the table, obviously, and there was unanimous consent, after a lot of debate, that we move away from that and go to manufacturing, because we all wanted to make sure that whatever we decided to do, we wanted to do a good and thorough job on a report that would end up in front of the House.

I am wondering what other witnesses were to be heard. You must have witnesses who want to come forward. I wonder why, since April, there hasn't been anything arranged for people to come forward with comments. Aside from that, I'm simply saying I don't want to lose track of the manufacturing, of what we have started to do.

Because of the debate today, we've cancelled important witnesses that were to be here. They're now not here, so we've done that. I only want to have confidence that we'll be able to move ahead on the manufacturing report from this committee. We've lost a day in terms of the manufacturing, with the telecommunications. Obviously, the witnesses aren't here today. I respect the chair's decision that because we wanted to have this debate, it wouldn't be appropriate to do so while the witnesses were sitting here. But again, I don't think any of us want to lose the prospect of the manufacturing report and getting it done on time.

I remember only three or four weeks ago, we were around the table discussing how we were going to complete the manufacturing debate and discussion in time to have the report, as we looked at the estimates and all the other things that were in front of us. So I put that in front of my colleagues from across the way. It doesn't have to be a long debate. It's simply that I think we all want to get to the end on the manufacturing and this is time taken away from that opportunity, that's all.

•(1550)

The Chair: Thank you.

I have Mr. Arthur, I have Mr. Carrie, and I have Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Arthur.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Arthur (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, Ind.): Mr. Chairman, I understood from what Mr. McTeague and Mr. Crête said that we're at the point of asking ourselves if we can come up with a motion that everyone would agree to.

If we've now come to the end of the process, I'd like to make two or three comments about what I observed during the hearing and about some of the things I have learned during my 35 years of working in industries regulated by the CRTC, with all of the problems that entails.

If I could address the committee before we proceed to vote, I would be most grateful. However, if we're still at the stage of trying to present the committee's position to the House, than I'll have no part of that. I am, after all, merely an independent. Therefore, I will abstain from commenting for the moment. But if you are interested in hearing my views before the vote is held, then I'll be happy to share a few of my observations with you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Arthur, that's up to you. You can certainly allow the committee to proceed to a possible amendment to the motion, and you can speak after that, if you wish. It's at your discretion.

Mr. André Arthur: Maybe it won't be necessary for me to speak. I don't want to take the time of the committee without reason. But if it goes to a vote on the merits of what we saw, then I would have a few things to say, to propose to my colleagues.

The Chair: You can certainly indicate that to me, Mr. Arthur, if you'd like to speak on it.

Mr. André Arthur: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We would like to see this stay in committee. If we bring it forward, we'll have a possible three hours of debate in the House. We'll tie up the House of Commons when we really haven't done anything toward this. We've had it since March, and I trust that members have had the opportunity to look at it. I'll be very interested to see, actually, which witnesses the members would like to have called before the committee that have not already been spoken to.

If your intention is not to have a concurrence debate, could I ask you, on the record, if you're not going to ask for one? If we send back to the House.... Because what I could do is offer a government response instead.

The Chair: Why don't we have Mr. Van Kesteren speak and then perhaps we'll have the mover respond.

Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Masse was talking about a need to change the Telecommunications Act. We're not talking about changing the act, we're talking about a change in policy. This seems to be quite a drastic step just for a change in policy.

As well, to the members opposite, what names do you have? Who else do you want to appear before this panel? Do you have somebody in mind? I have a list here with 166 names on it. Who do you have in mind? Did you think this through? Do you possibly have some suggestions for the chair for some other names?

The Chair: Monsieur Crête, I think you're getting some questions from members opposite with respect to the motion. As well, I just want you to clarify, because you are the mover, that you are recommending that we do this after we finish the manufacturing study, as Mr. McTeague has said. Our goal is to finish the manufacturing study by early or mid-December at the very latest, so this study would take place in the new year. It would start probably in late January and finish by March 1.

So that's one question, and then you have a question from Mr. Carrie. I sense that if the purpose is to study that, there is some openness on Mr. Carrie's part to study it in committee. I think what he wants to avoid is a three-hour debate in the House on a motion on which we've had only one day of hearings. We actually haven't received the information response to the questions you're asking.

Then Mr. Van Kesteren has some questions for you as well.

Monsieur Crête, your response.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Yes. Please remind me if I forget one of the questions.

We can't automatically say that there will be a debate in the House. Ultimately, that decision will be made by the parties. One of us would have to table a notice of motion calling for the motion to be put before the House for consideration. I tabled one such motion in conjunction with the report on the manufacturing sector and it has yet to be acted upon. I can't say whether or not that will happen. The decision rests with the House.

The committee must decide whether or not to report to the House. I for one feel that it's imperative that we do so. At issue are government instructions to the CRTC. We're asking the government for more time to examine these instructions before it issues an implementation order. This is important. We report to the House, the home of the elected representatives of the people. We want the House to be apprised of the situation.

I want to reiterate that a debate will not automatically take place. However, I can't promise, on behalf of the Bloc, that there won't be a debate sometime in the future. I don't think anyone else can make that promise either on behalf of their party. That's not my choice. What matters to me is that we report to the House, to convey how important it is for us to have more time, since there are many issues to consider.

As for Mr. Van Kesteren, I won't get into the number of witnesses and so forth today. We've had a lot dumped on us all at once and it's a lot to process. There have been more questions raised than answers supplied. I have many questions. Our request is by no means frivolous.

Regarding our meeting schedule, I don't think we should deal with both issues at the same time. The manufacturing sector report is important to us. We spearheaded this initiative at the request of many different people. This issue is also important.

Earlier, we adopted an amendment setting the reporting deadline for no later than March 1. We need to adopt a coherent approach if we want to meet this deadline. We need to take the time to do what we have to do. If we must devote one, two or five meetings specifically to this matter, then so be it. I'm prepared to talk about how we will proceed, in so far as it is relevant to the adoption of the motion. If Conservative members maintain that they agree with the timetable and plan to vote in favour of the motion, then let's discuss it. However, if they're not prepared to adopt the motion, there is no point discussing the timetable.

• (1555)

[*English*]

The Chair: The clerk passed me a note to remind me to be helpful as to what the process is, and perhaps I should just explain this.

If the motion passes, which I assume it very well might, then I, as the chair, would report this to the House. Then a member could put a notice of a motion of concurrence to report in the House—48 hours'

notice, two sleeps—and then a member would move concurrence at routine proceedings and a debate begins and there's a three-hour debate.

I think what Mr. Carrie is asking very directly—and you can say yes, you can say no, you can say “I'm not going to answer that question”, it's your right—he's asking very directly of everyone on this side if any one of the opposition parties is going to put it on the notice paper and stand up and move a three-hour debate. So it's a very direct question; it's a very plain question. It's a question that government asks.

I don't want to speak for Mr. Carrie, but if he gets a commitment that no other party will do that, and it's not to have a three-hour debate in the House, but have further study at committee, my sense is that he and his members would be a lot more open to this motion. It's a very generic question. You could answer yes or no or “I don't want to answer it”, but that's the question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: I'll answer that question.

I can't speak for my leader. If I've learned anything during my 13 years in politics, that would be it. The same holds for the other parties. If we report to the House, parliamentary rules apply. We'll see if there is a debate, or not. In the short term, I'm not interested in having one.

Once the motion is adopted, we will do whatever needs to be done. However, I wouldn't want someone saying to me six weeks down the road that I promised there wouldn't be a debate, but that my leader decided otherwise. If the motion is adopted, I don't intend in the short term to request a debate of this nature. That's my position.

The government's reaction will also factor into the equation.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Lapierre.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, we have no intention either of monopolizing three hours of the House's time strictly to debate the motion. As Industry Critic, I don't think that would be in anyone's best interest. Of course, I could have the same problem as Mr. Crête if my leader decides that holding a debate would be a good thing. Regardless of what happens, I would rather confine the debate to this committee, devote more time to this and do our work.

We want to take our work seriously and to get a clear picture of the instruction's implications. We're not up for petty parliamentary games. Quite frankly, I don't think this topic is sexy enough to cause a demonstration on Parliament Hill.

• (1600)

[*English*]

The Chair: Let's go to Mr. Masse to speak, and then we'll go to Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Brian Masse: Briefly, the maximum House time is three hours anyway, so I'm puzzled about the concern. Three hours to spend on a lot of issues, and it's important for the public to be aware of a number of different issues. I don't know what I'll do with regard to the motion. I didn't under manufacturing last time; I don't know if I'll do it this time. I have to consult my caucus, but for three hours of House time, that's limited. I can't understand the concern of Canadians not having three hours of debated public time about the telecommunication issues that are going to be facing them across this country. It's just three hours.

The Chair: Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: If I could address that, Mr. Masse, to what end and to what purpose? As I was saying before, I'm sure you've had the opportunity to look this over. They did a really good job; for ten months all they did was listen to witnesses and come up with what we think is a very good report. This is a report that was started by the Liberal government. Respectfully, they did all the hard work. They did the grunt work back in 2003; there were recommendations. Allan Rock at the time said, "The government is firmly committed to fostering the long-term health of the telecommunications sector, which is a key driver of innovation in Canada. This requires both a regulatory environment that is conducive to competition and adequate access to capital."

I want to move forward to find out exactly what the intention is. To debate it for three hours in the House, without any further information—If the intent is to listen to more witnesses, we could be agreeable to that, but the Liberal Party was there. We're just trying to implement what you're doing. We're open to listening to more witnesses, but I really don't want to waste three hours of House time. It is very important to debate this in the House, but I'm saying, Mr. Masse, what is the point of doing it now without even having the opportunity to bring the witnesses, which is apparently what the motion is all about—we want to listen to more witnesses? It's a waste of time for the House of Commons. Three hours in the House of Commons is very expensive time for the Canadian taxpayer, and if nothing new is going to come out of it, why bother doing it?

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead, Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: To what extent is the three hours...? I find it interesting that the parliamentary secretary is quoting Allan Rock. I could actually take the chair's quotes of Allan Rock and table them at any point in time in this committee.

The Chair: I always praised him.

• (1605)

Mr. Brian Masse: I think you'd find some interesting quotes there. That's all I have to say, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'll just perhaps add a couple of comments.

I'm sensing that I'm not getting a yes. I sense from the Liberals that they will raise this in the House. So the concern has not been allayed.

I would just say, as a member who was in opposition, that occasionally, very occasionally, you know, we used to put things on the order paper and we used to rise during routine business and we used to debate concurrence with a committee report just to throw the government off its agenda. It was on very rare occasions, I know.

We're all parliamentarians. We all know how the system works. Let's be completely blunt about that.

I think the second concern—and Mr. McTeague, I know you've given your word, and that's fine, for your party—is a substantive one, and it relates to the fact that we've had one very compressed day on this here at committee. So we can't stand up in the House and speak as if we've heard from all the witnesses. And I'll be very honest. For some witnesses, for whom we told there was not enough time, we sent their written material to members. But they did not have the opportunity to present here.

I think it is first a procedural question, and second a substantive question. Obviously, I don't expect members to speak for their leaders, but members who are critics, I know very well the respect that your various leaders have for you as critics, and they'd certainly follow your advice.

If any of you can give any more assurance to Mr. Carrie, that might be helpful, but if you can't, that's your decision.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Can you clarify that, please?

The Chair: Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Chair, I can only reiterate for you what Mr. Lapierre said, and I think that's very clear and on the record. I can say no more than that.

As you have quite readily pointed out, there are a number of witnesses who may have wanted to come forward who did not get a chance to. Without getting into substantive debate, I think the real issue here is whether what is written in the book that Mr. Carrie has put forward, a very exhaustive book, is in fact consistent with what the minister has said, is consistent with what stakeholders are saying, and is consistent with what consumers are saying.

Frankly, I think that as a committee we have an obligation to look a little deeper within the timeframes that I think are acceptable to all of us, understanding that our priority is manufacturing.

The Chair: Okay. Do I have any...?

Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Could we clarify, then?

Mr. Crête, you're saying no, you can't say that there won't be debate. The Bloc Québécois still may come up for debate. And Mr. Masse, it is the same thing; it is no.

Mr. Chair, maybe we'll just vote then, but I'd like a recorded vote, please.

The Chair: You want a recorded vote on the motion as amended.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Yes.

Mr. André Arthur: Do I still have my right to speak?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. André Arthur: That I had—

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: The vote has been called, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: I would ask members if we will allow Mr. Arthur to address the issue after the vote.

[Translation]

Mr. André Arthur: I don't need anyone doing any favours for me. I said I would let people talk this through. It would appear that the discussion is over and the vote has been called. Therefore, I won't ask for any favours and I'll refrain from commenting.

Thank you, sir.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. Are you ready for the vote?

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: Mr. Arthur, you can now have the floor if you want it. I mean, I certainly indicated to you that you would be able to address.

Mr. André Arthur: The motion has been carried.

The Chair: That's right.

Mr. André Arthur: And our day is done. The reason we were meeting is finished.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. André Arthur: Thank you very much.

The Chair: I have Mr. Carrie and then Mr. McTeague.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Chair, I would ask that we have a dissenting report. Would that be appropriate?

The Chair: Members, may I please have your attention?

Because this is technically a report....

The Clerk of the Committee: Mr. Chair, through you to the committee, it is perfectly within the power of the committee, if it wishes, to allow a dissenting or a supplementary opinion to be appended after the chair's signature after the report.

Generally provisions are made as to the length that will be allowed. If it is the committee's will to append a dissenting opinion after the signature after the report, the committee is perfectly within its right to do so.

The Chair: Mr. Carrie, do you have a length that you want to propose?

Mr. Colin Carrie: I can't give you that right now, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, through you to the committee, all I'm saying is that committees generally try to decide how long a dissenting opinion will be, especially if the report is very small.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Carrie is requesting a dissenting report of approximately two pages. Size 12 font?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: *D'accord?*

A voice: *D'accord.*

● (1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: No.

Mr. Chairman, according to the Standing Orders, a brief report must be presented. Therefore, it should be shorter than the main report.

When we've presented reports in the past, opposition parties submitted two-page reports, whereas the majority report could be 50, 75 or 100 pages long. We have prepared a report that is no more than a page long. I could always cut that down to three or five sentences, if that's what he wants. But seriously....

[English]

The Chair: Point of order?

Mr. Brian Masse: Just a point of order on clarification of process.

We already had the concluding vote, and I thought we actually discussed dissenting reports prior to votes and to reports being made.

I'm wondering whether this is entirely out of order, because my recollection of dissenting reports and the process has always been that this was part of what was constructed in the final vote—and there was understanding of what would be done prior to that report being brought forth.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, through you to the committee again, what I mentioned was that generally when you're adopting the motions regarding the reports, provisions are made for this before the final report is adopted. But it's not out of order, if the committee wishes to do so.

The Chair: It's the general practice, but it's not—

Mr. Brian Masse: Okay, I'm not stuck on that if it's fine. That's fine.

The Chair: Perhaps as the chair, could I get a clarification from Monsieur Crête?

Is it the dissenting report in principle, or is it the size of the dissenting report that you're concerned about?

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: No. I'm ready to come to an amicable agreement, even though the clerk did say that as a rule, provision is made for this in the motion and we neglected to see to it this time. Seriously, if the report is a page long, then the minority report should be no more than a quarter or half a page long. It's ludicrous for the minority report to be longer than the main report. I'm willing to go along with a half-page minority report. It's not included in the motion, but we'll go along with tabling it in this fashion. I don't have a problem with that.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie: I want to assure the member that it's not going to be any length at all. Basically it's just our objection to the motion and our clarification as to why.

A voice: No problem.

The Chair: As the chair is from western Canada, and we're very brief and laconic, I could offer to edit the report.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: I have a comment, Mr. Chair, to make the parliamentary secretary aware that if they want to put their position on record for that reason, this might actually relate to debate, because depending on that report will be the clarification that's going to be necessary during the three hours of potential debate.

I'm just raising a practical point of what could transpire, and I have no objection to whatever length of report the government wants to put. That's fine.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Masse, would you care to join the Bloc Québécois.

An hon. member: The Ontario Bloc.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Masse, the clerk informs me that as with most reports, a dissenting report is not part of the report. It's appended at the end of the report.

Mr. Brian Masse: But it's tabled as well?

The Chair: It's tabled as well; you're correct.

Mr. Brian Masse: And read in the House of Commons.

The Chair: So I sense there's a consensus on this? Do I have a consensus?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Chair, this is not to do with this motion. If you would find it acceptable, I just want to ask a question on the liaison committee group with respect to travel. I'm willing to hear others, but I do need to speak to this as an item before we end.

The Chair: Okay.

Are there any other members who have any discussions further to...?

Monsieur Crête.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: Earlier, Mr. Carrie called for the vote. We voted. Mr. Arthur had asked to speak prior to that time, but the vote was called. That's why I wanted... However, since it's 4:15 and we have time remaining, and since Mr. Arthur wishes to comment on the substantive question, I have no objections. He could provide some insight into how we should conduct this study that we've agreed to have and report back, no later than March 1.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Arthur, the floor is yours, if you want it.

[Translation]

Mr. André Arthur: It's kind of you, Mr. Crête to allow me the opportunity to comment on this matter. A newly elected Member of Parliament may have some preconceived notions but not the same level of experience that you have acquired over the years. We still harbour some illusions, including the hope of presenting some convincing arguments that rise above mere partisanship, especially when one sits as an Independent. That's why I asked to speak to this topic. I was hoping to convince you to be exceedingly cautious in the face of certain arguments put forward by some of the witnesses, because although they claimed to be speaking as individuals, they were not really acting independently. There is a history in the CRTC environment of having people who can't say no do the dirty work.

I certainly can't sway you one way or the other as far as the motion on the table is concerned, since the vote has taken place and everything has been settled. Thank you, though, for your overture. I will simply abstain from commenting. I may have thought that I could convince you to change your mind, but I see now that that's impossible. So, I won't waste your time.

• (1615)

[English]

The Chair: Okay, Monsieur Arthur. Thank you.

There being no further comments on this issue, we'll now proceed to other business.

We'll proceed to the travel item. Mr. McTeague, perhaps you can speak to this.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Chair, I've had an opportunity to speak to my whip, and the only concern was with respect to the liaison committee not having had a chance to look at this yet. I just want to know and to highlight for you whether or not you've had an opportunity to raise this, in your own right, as chair of the committee, so that our own whips are aware of it, other than the anecdotal information I'm giving to them that we'd like to travel. Have you spoken to the liaison committee yet?

The Chair: I have only talked informally with my whip about this, indicating to him the time period during which we want to travel. I don't know what other parties have done.

There has not been a liaison committee meeting since we last had this discussion, and what we're waiting for, first, is some specific recommendation from committee members that we can itemize exactly what we're going to do; then we would have the clerk lay out the respective costs, and then I would go to the liaison committee.

On the timing of that, if we could do this by next week, I know that's quite ambitious.

Basically, we're just looking for direction from the committee.

I know, Mr. McTeague, that you submitted a fair amount of detail.

Hon. Dan McTeague: That's correct.

The Chair: We have details for the Toronto-Oshawa section. Mr. Carrie, Mr. Shipley, Mr. Van Kesteren, and Mr. McTeague have all submitted. My understanding is we do not have something for the Montreal-Granby portion or for the Halifax portion.

Mr. Lapierre.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre: On the subject of Montreal, I had suggested that the committee visit the Bombardier and Peerless operations. The latter is the largest clothing manufacturer in Montreal and I think it's important to visit the company's facilities. As for Bombardier, if we consider the major players in the manufacturing sector in terms of economic development in the greater Montreal area, I think this company could be on our list.

Mr. Paul Crête: Maybe.

[*English*]

The Chair: Just as a quick question, Mr. Lapierre, could you clarify if this is for site visits?

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Yes, it's for sites. That would be an eye-opener, I think.

Mr. Arthur had always said it was better for us to go

[*Translation*]

visit sites in person.

Mr. André Arthur: That's true, Mr. Lapierre, but I also said that the majority of jobs in the manufacturing sector were in SMEs, not in large, unionized companies. That's not where we're about to find the real manufacturing jobs in Canada.

I don't need to tour Bombardier's operations to be told that employees are very good. All I need to do is consult international aviation forums to find out that their performance has been seriously challenged.

Hon. Jean Lapierre: However, many small manufacturers depend on the aeronautics sector, on Bombardier and on other companies. Admittedly, we could also visit smaller operations, companies in Granby, for example. Perhaps...

[*English*]

The Chair: I've just been advised that we should actually go in camera for this discussion.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Arthur: Certainly. That's not a problem.

Hon. Dan McTeague: There's no one here, except for departmental officials.

Mr. Paul Crête: Is there a problem?

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll suspend for ten seconds.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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