



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Official Languages

LANG • NUMBER 001 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, May 9, 2006

—
Chair

Mr. Guy Lauzon

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•(0910)

[*Translation*]

The Clerk of the Committee: Hello. I see quorum.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first point on the agenda is the election of a chair. I am prepared to receive motions to that effect.

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): I'd like to nominate Monsieur Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: Are there any other motions?

As I see no other motions, I declare Mr. Lauzon duly elected chair of the committee.

[*English*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Elections should be like this all the time.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: Before Mr. Lauzon takes the chair, we will proceed to the election of the two vice-chairs.

The first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition. I am prepared to receive motion to that effect.

Mr. Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): I move that Ms. Folco be elected vice-chair.

The Clerk: Are there any other motions?

As there are no other motions, I declare Ms. Folco duly elected vice-chair of the committee.

Now, you will proceed to the election of the second vice-chair, who must be a member of one of the other two opposition parties. I'm prepared to receive motions to that effect.

M. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): I would be pleased to move that the member for Acadie-Bathurst, Mr. Yvon Godin, be elected second vice-chair.

The Clerk: Are there any other motions?

As I see no other motions, I declare Mr. Yvon Godin duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

I would invite Mr. Lauzon to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Perhaps we can begin by introducing ourselves.

My name is Guy Lauzon and I am the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Ms. Folco, you may go ahead.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My name is Raymonde Folco and I am the member for Laval-Les Îles, a riding just north of Montreal.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): My name is Jean-Claude d'Amours and I am the member for Madawaska-Restigouche, in Northern New-Brunswick.

Hon. Raymond Simard: My name is Raymond Simard and I am the member for Saint-Boniface, Manitoba.

Mr. Brian Murphy: My name is Brian Murphy and I am the member for Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe.

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): My name is Paule Brunelle and I am the member for Trois-Rivières.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): My name is Vivian Barbot and I am the member for Papineau, in Montreal.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): My name is Yvon Godin and I am the member for Acadie-Bathurst. Two years ago, we celebrated the 400^e anniversary of the arrival of the first Francophones in Canada.

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): My name is Luc Harvey and I am the member for Louis-Hébert.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: My name is Pierre Lemieux and I am the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, right next to Ottawa.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): My name is Sylvie Boucher and I am the member for Beauport-Limoilou.

The Chair: Thank you. We will now proceed to routine motions. We will deal with them one at the time. Is it necessary to read them?

The Clerk: You only have to mention the titles, they all have a copy of them.

The Chair: You all have a copy of them. There are several routine motions. We will start with services of analyst from the Library of Parliament. Would someone like to move the motion? Mr. Brian Murphy moves the motion.

(Motion carried.) [*See Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Mr. Paré, could you introduce yourself?

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré (Analyst, Library of Parliament): Good morning. My name is Jean-Rodrigue Paré and I am an analyst from the Library of Parliament. I'm responsible for matters of official languages, social services and foreign policy. I have been officially assigned to the official languages committee for this year.

The Chair: Welcome.

The second point on the agenda is the appointment of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. Would someone like to move this motion?

Ms. Raymonde Folco: I'm willing to move the motion: that the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be composed of the chair, the two vice-chairs and a member of the other opposition party. That would be a member of the Bloc Québécois, I believe.

The Chair: No, no.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Oh! Sorry. I forgot, there was...

The Chair: No. There is the chair, one vice-chair and...

Ms. Raymonde Folco: No, there are two vice-chairs. That's what I said.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'd like to lend some clarity on this motion. Last year, if I'm not mistaken, we agreed to having the standing committee sit as its own steering committee. I move that we proceed in the same way this year. As members of our group generally get along rather well, we could decide on our agenda all together.

If it's all right, I move that the entire committee carry out the duties of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure.

• (0915)

The Chair: Is everyone in agreement?

Now, with respect to the motion on reduced quorum, the clerk just told me he suggested the same thing as last year.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm sorry, were you all in favour of the previous motion?

Ms. Raymonde Folco: I will withdraw my motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: If you withdraw your motion, I will move that the entire committee carry out the duties of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure.

The Chair: This motion was agreed to.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We have to put the question.

(Motion carried)

The Chair: We now move to the motion on reduced quorum.

Once again, the clerk suggested we do the same thing as last year. Would someone like to move the motion?

Ms. Raymonde Folco: I'm sorry, I don't understand. Are we discussing the reduced quorum?

Some hon. members: Yes.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Is it exactly as worded, or different?

An hon. member: It's the same thing as last year.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Very well.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Chairman, I would like some clarification. Do the two members on the government side include the chair? I see here you have to have at least two opposition members, but it does not state that there must be government members. You need four members, even if they're all opposition members. Is that correct?

Mr. Luc Harvey: The motion reads as follows: "provided at least four members are present including two members of the opposition." That means that members of the opposition cannot hold a meeting on their own. It is shared. There must be at least two opposition members.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Chairman, it states: "when a quorum is not present provided at least four members are present." There must be at least four, and at least two opposition members. So, you could have four opposition members.

Mr. Luc Harvey: It does not state there needs to be at least two of them; it states "including two members of the opposition."

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: It says "provided at least four members are present including two members..." That means at least...

Mr. Luc Harvey: There's a comma there.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: I don't object to our adding that there must be at least four members and that...

Mr. Luc Harvey: There have to be representatives from at least two parties at a meeting. If four members from the Liberal Party hold a meeting amongst themselves, that won't do.

Mr. Yvon Godin: It says that the chair be authorized to hold meetings... The chair is a government member. If there is meeting, he's the one that asked for it, and he's a government member. If he doesn't ask for it, there is no meeting.

An hon. member: He has to be there?

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's correct. He calls the meeting.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: The two vice-chairs are also entitled to call meetings, and they're both in opposition. I support Mr. Harvey's suggestion according to which there should be four members. Out of these four, at least two must be opposition members, which suggests that the other two must be government members. I agree with this interpretation of reduced quorum.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'd like to ask the clerk to clarify this interpretation. What is written is very clear: that the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present provided at least four members are present. We are all members of the committee. Four members of the committee must be present and of these four, two must be opposition members.

Technically speaking, that means that there could be three opposition members and one government member. Four committee members attend the meeting and at least two of them must be from the opposition. It does not state two opposition members and two government members. Four committee members must be present. We are all members. Of these four, two must be from the opposition. Usually, that only applies when there is a reduced quorum. Most of the time, it's to hear testimony.

Let's not forget that we have witnesses coming from as far as Vancouver, Halifax and Montreal. The issue is simply to hear testimony and not to hold votes. We agree to having a reduced quorum to make sure that our witnesses are heard, out of respect for them and for the money we will be spending. There is no debate in the committee. We are there to hear witnesses testify, to ask questions of them and to report back to all committee members.

● (0920)

The Chair: That is the purpose of the motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The only member who can call a meeting is the chair, and he's on the government's side. So the government is represented. When we refer to a reduced quorum, it does not mean that nine or ten of us cannot attend the meeting. If witnesses testify, we have to make sure we hear their evidence rather than send them home.

It's a good motion. We had adopted it in the past and it had worked very well.

The Chair: All right. Mr. Harvey.

Mr. Luc Harvey: My question is for the clerk. In referring to the chair, we are not talking about vice-chair, but rather the chair.

The Chair: It is the chair. Is it agreed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We will now deal with the witness expenses.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Chairman, I move that, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses, not exceeding two representatives per organization and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be at the discretion of the chair.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: With respect to document distribution: I am prepared to entertain a motion.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Chairman, I move that we distribute committee documents only when they exist in both official languages and that no document provided by a witness be distributed without the clerk's authorization.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Things are running smoothly with the new chair. Would someone like to move the motion on working meals?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I will move the motion on working meals: that the clerk of the committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide for the working meals of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We now move to the motion on staff at in-camera meetings.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I suggest that we add the words "party" before the word "staff" so that not only our assistants may attend the meetings but party members as well.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: If there is someone from my party who is not necessarily...

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: From the whip's office.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: The whip's office, all right, but it would have to be Hill staff, otherwise, I could bring my director from Beauport—Limouilou along with me when he's in town. It could be too wide open.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: But if you have an assistant...

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: She's here.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: On the Hill, but you also have one...

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: In my riding office, obviously. It would have to be an MP's staff member.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Exactly.

It could be someone from the whip's office for instance. If you add the words "party", you broaden the definition and we can invite these people.

The Chair: Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: We could specify "one staff person from the member's office or from his caucus." The caucus is not the party as such. We need a researcher to accompany us and help us. So we should say "or caucus staff."

● (0925)

Mr. Luc Harvey: We also discussed this issue at the finance committee. We discussed it for approximately 15 minutes and we came to the conclusion that it was the right wording. You are accompanied by the staff you need, whether it be party staff or not. I don't see why we would add anything else.

We should simply say "that each member be allowed to be accompanied." You could be accompanied by whomsoever you choose, be it office staff or someone from your entourage, and that would be the case for in-camera meetings as well.

Anything we add will create limits and you will have to deal with them. If we state "party" and you want to bring an expert witness or someone else in who is not from your party, you will be limited. If we only use the word "staff" it is not a problem. It is as open as can be.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: What we're concerned about is that by stating that it has to be a staff person, we may be prohibited from bringing along research staff, etc. That was the purpose of adding the word.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: I would like to remind members that this does not apply to ordinary meetings. We're referring to in-camera meetings. At regular meetings, you could bring anyone you like. These regular meetings are public. We are discussing the few in-camera meetings which may take place during the session. It seems to me that we are nitpicking.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: When we have to vote on motions, we are pleased to have representatives from the whip's office with us. In that case, it would be party staff and not office staff.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: These people are necessarily members of our staff because the party is there to help you.

Mr. Luc Harvey: If we indicate that only party staff can attend, we will limit ourselves. If we simply indicate that our staff can attend, we will be able to choose whom we want to bring with us.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: It seems that it is the opposite. If we say that it must be a staff member, we are afraid that it would be limited to our office staff or our assistants. But if we refer to party staff, it includes everyone.

The Chair: Ms. Folco.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: I think there is a mistake here, Vivian. The whip's office or its staff do not represent the party. They are members of the party's caucus, but not of the party itself. Therefore, I do not mind it when people say they want staff from the whip's office to be present, but the wording cannot refer only to "the party".

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I think that by adding the word "party" or something else, it is limiting. In any case, as a Conservative member, if I invite someone to accompany me, I will not look for someone from Mr. D'Amours' office. It will be someone from my own staff. That way, it is not limiting. However, if we debate a motion, for instance, I might need the advice of a lawyer who is not necessarily a member of the Conservative Party, but who is an expert in a given field. I could take him with me for the day and he would be a member of my staff because he could advise us.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Chairman, we are straying from the motion. It is not true that we can bring whomever we want with us to in camera meetings of the committee, and it is not true that we can bring a lawyer who is not a staff member of our caucus or of our office. I understand what you are saying. The word "staff" refers to our office or caucus staff, but not people from the outside. I do not object at all to bringing members from our office or caucus staff, but this does not include people from the outside, otherwise, would it really be an in camera meeting?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: If we say "party staff"...

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: I have no problem with the wording as it is: "to be accompanied by one staff person". That person can be part of the office staff or of caucus staff.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Exactly.

● (0930)

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I was told there was a mistake.

The Chair: One moment. Mr. Godin would like to speak.

Mr. Yvon Godin: The same wording is used in every committee. For instance, on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, the Bloc members had brought three staff members to an in camera meeting. We were studying a bill, and the Bloc had brought staff from the whip's office. There never was any question not to let them be present at a meeting.

This motion authorizes staff members to be present at in camera meetings. It has always been like that. We cannot open the meetings up to other people. That is important. After all, we are talking about in camera meetings. I would not want you to bring a member of your party to one of our in camera meetings. If that happens, it is not an in camera meeting anymore. We do not have any control on people from outside the House of Commons or on people who are not our

employees. But we have to control these things. So when we refer to staff members, we are talking about people we have hired to work for our caucus or for our office. As far as I know, we have never forbidden these people to attend meetings when we study bills. At in camera meetings, we do not only discuss bills, but all kinds of other issues. Sometimes extremely sensitive matters are discussed in camera. We have had meetings where absolutely no information was allowed out of the room.

So I move that the motion be adopted as drafted.

The Chair: Fine. Are you moving the motion, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I agree. The confusion came from the fact that the previous version said: "by staff members". The wording was changed before the motion was presented to the committee. I therefore withdraw my motion.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Chairman, I think that we need an amendment to clarify the situation. We have just discussed it.

Mr. Luc Harvey: The situation has been corrected. The motion now reads: "be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person" and not "of the member's staff". The word "staff" is very open-ended and mostly refers to the political aspect.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: In my view, we have to clarify the wording. We have just discussed it. We have to specify that the person has to be a member from the caucus' staff or has to be employed by the member.

Mr. Luc Harvey: We don't have to do so.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: We can't agree to having someone who works for the party. I think it has to be clarified.

Mr. Luc Harvey: I think that everyone can live with the motion as worded.

The Chair: I'll hear from one more member and then we will vote on the motion.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Mr. Chairman, it is clear that staff members have to be people who work on Parliament Hill or in a member's office. It cannot be someone working for the party or for a law firm. It has to be someone working for caucus or a member. I don't see how it can be anyone else. We are not responsible for anyone else.

The Chair: Mr. Godin has moved the motion as drafted. We will vote on it now.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We will now move on to the next motion: transcripts of in-camera meetings. Would anyone like to move the motion?

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Chairman, I will move the motion: that one copy of the transcript of all in-camera meetings be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by the members of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We will now move on to the next motion: notice of motion. This is a fairly standard motion. Can I have a mover? Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I would like to move the motion.

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: I move that we add two other motions to our routine motions. The first one reads as follows:

[*English*]

That whenever the main estimates or the supplementary estimates are tabled in the House, our committee invite the minister or any relevant senior officials of a department to appear at a meeting of the committee, which is televised if possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I don't know if this is a point of order, but we have just adopted a motion stating that no motion shall be discussed in committee unless a 48 hours' notice has been given. I would therefore, if you please, like to receive a notice of 48 hours for motions presented before the committee.

• (0935)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: We can do so, because it says here:

[*English*]

“unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration”.

We are under consideration of routine motions. We can defer to Thursday; that's fine. I'm just saying that we are considering routine motions right now, and this is something I'd like to add to the routine motions.

[*Translation*]

But we can wait.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would like him to table his motions, but I would like us to vote on them in 48 hours so that we will have had time to study them.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Of course.

The Chair: We will have a little more time to make our decisions on Thursday.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: I will read the second motion and give it to the clerk, who will then be able to distribute it.

[*English*]

That whenever a Chapter of a Report of the Auditor General refers to a subject under the mandate of the Committee, the Committee study the matter and invite officials of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and any relevant Senior Officials of a Department to appear at a meeting of the Committee and, if possible, that it be televised.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I will give it to the clerk.

[*English*]

On the questioning of witnesses, the 38th Parliament—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Before we deal with this issue, I would ask to people who draft these documents — and I don't want to name names, because I don't know them anyway — to be very careful with French grammar and vocabulary.

The word “opposition” is feminine. I was taught in grammar school that in French all words that end with “tion” were feminine.

Therefore, in the expression “opposition officielle”, the word “officielle” must be in the feminine. I would therefore ask that the person who writes this to proofread their text carefully so that the French is perfect, at least at this committee. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Folco.

This motion deals with the way we question witnesses. Are there any suggestions?

Ms. Barbot.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I suggest that we replace the words “que les témoins soient accordés”, which is grammatically incorrect, by the words “que l'on accorde aux témoins”. We also have to be careful with the wording in French.

The Chair: That's not the motion. The clerk tells me that this is the way we proceeded last year.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Excuse me, Mr. Chairman, but it is still incorrect French. I think that in this committee, we must be extremely careful that the documents we issue be written in the most correct language possible.

The Chair: The motion is that we proceed with questioning the witnesses the same way as last time. This that agreeable to you?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I move that we proceed the same way as last time. I think that was very successful.

The Chair: Do you want to move this officially?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, I so move.

The Chair: Are there any comments?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: At the next meeting, we will be discussing Mr. Lemieux's two motions as well as future business.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Chairman, when we left in the fall, we had a list of things to do. Will you be sending it to us, or has that already then done?

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: I have a list of topics that were suspended at the end of the last Parliament. I also have a list of topics that have been added since then. The trouble is, even if I finished drafting this document today, it would be impossible for me to have it distributed on time for Thursday morning meeting at 9:00 a.m. It has to be translated and revised to ensure the quality of both French and English. I could probably send you something within two days, but you're probably going to receive it Thursday, just before the meeting.

Hon. Raymond Simard: As soon as possible, please.

Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré: If you want us to do it that way, I have no objection.

• (0940)

Ms. Raymonde Folco: No, it's just a title with a brief two or three lines description.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Exactly. We will know where we're headed.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: 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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