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Thursday, October 19, 2006

—
Chair

Mr. Gary Goodyear

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•(1210)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC)): Ladies and gentlemen, we'll begin the public meeting now.

I'm assuming we're handing the floor to Ms. Redman to reintroduce her motion.

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): My apologies, but I wonder whether the clerk has a copy of the motion, just in case any of us didn't memorize it.

Thank you.

I will read the motion again. This is the one I tabled originally on October 5:

That this committee recommends that the Standing Orders in effect on October 5, 2006, including the provisional Standing Orders, be made permanent, and that the adoption of this motion be reported to the House forthwith.

I would reiterate that these standing orders were presented by the current government when they were in opposition. It was agreed to at that time by all parties, acknowledging in a minority government that we all have to work together, that we would accept these provisional standing orders.

It's our opinion that they have been working relatively well. Certainly we are willing to discuss.... I know there have actually been some conversations among our staff people.

We would like to pursue this motion this morning. We would also be amenable to presenting an order in the House, if one of the items was the provision that there be a five-day call of any committee to reconvene, such that, if it were during a period when the House was not sitting, we would be amenable to a House order that would extend this specific provision to ten days. I believe everybody's staff was party to that conversation.

We're more than willing to continue to discuss any other issues, but I would move the motion that is before us.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion?

Monsieur Guimond, and then Mr. Hill.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is not my intention to repeat what was mentioned at the in camera meeting of the committee of House leaders and whips. However, there appears to be a misunderstanding over the consent that was given. I acknowledge that Mr. Hill suggested solving the

issue through discussions, that is holding a meeting of our staff in order to determine how Standing Orders are applied.

We do not feel, for our part, that we are not keeping our word. I know that under our parliamentary rules, of British origin, several issues are dealt with through hand shakes, agreements, or by what is commonly called gentlemen agreements. I would simply like to reassure my colleague, Mr. Hill, and tell him that it is not our intention to go back on our word. Nevertheless—and I checked this with the Bloc Québécois parliamentary leader, who also attended the meeting—we do not feel that there was agreement on how to proceed.

I would therefore suggest that we immediately proceed with adopting these Standing Orders. Of course, if the government would like us to undertake a review of all the Standing Orders...But I do not think that it is its intention. If there are some problems, if minor changes need to be made, the parties can agree on this among themselves. We can do anything in this House as long as it is not contrary to tradition. Accordingly, if minor changes are required, then the leaders or the whips can discuss this; we will find the appropriate forum.

I do, however, wish to indicate that we, the Bloc Québécois, will vote in favour of Ms. Redman's motion so that these Standing Orders be adopted. I did not bring the notes that I had prepared on Tuesday but if my memory serves me well, I believe that these provisional Standing Orders have been in effect for 22 months. It is true, Parliament adjourned at the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006, and that we did not come back immediately, but the fact remains that these provisional Standing Orders have been in effect since 2005, that is, for several months. According to normal practice, we can therefore put these Standing Orders into effect permanently.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Could we have Mr. Hill, please, and then Mr. Owen?

Hon. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I really don't know where to begin. I think the record clearly shows, with the motion that was adopted by the House unanimously the day following our agreement on September 19, how we were going to proceed with dealing with these provisional standing orders. I think that, as we say out west, we've plowed that ground, and I don't intend to plow all of those issues again. I don't see what we're going to gain by continuing a filibuster, because we've already made, I think, all the points that we can make on this.

If we proceed today with voting on the motion as it is, I will be voting against it on principle. As I said right from the very beginning—and my colleagues on the government side have reiterated this—we're not opposed to any of the standing orders. That was never the issue. We had had what I believe was a pretty good preliminary discussion at the House leaders and whips' meetings of some concerns we had with some of them, which the staff should meet about and perhaps work through.

We have never suggested that the changes would be anything other than very minor in nature. We also have had conversations in the past about the clerk's perhaps making some technical wording changes to these to make them more definitive in nature. Doing so would mean the standing orders would be clearer when the clerks need to interpret them from time to time. Also, hopefully it would be very clear to members of Parliament from all parties the intent of these standing order changes and how they work.

So that was always the intent, as far as I was concerned, of the discussion that we had and the agreement that we reached. As I say, Mr. Chair, I think I've plowed the ground fairly thoroughly about how upset I am about this, because it does strike to the very core of how we operate in Parliament, of how we have to operate if Parliament is going to be a functioning Parliament or a functioning people's House. We have to be able to trust one another and take someone's word when we come to these agreements.

Our staff met this morning, and I think they had a pretty good brief discussion. As Madam Redman already indicated, our main concern was this issue that was presented about the notice of motion and a meeting having to be held within five calendar days. It's been a bit problematic, more problematic than some of the other provisional standing orders. I think that even the general public—and I'll be the first to admit that they're probably not all that interested in most of our standing orders and how this place operates—would have to agree that common sense would say that's a fairly short period of time. Over the summer, for example, if something were to arise, and a committee member made a request that a standing committee meet, and it happened to be the July 1 weekend, three days would already be gone before people could even find out whether their schedules could be juggled to get to a meeting. Then you need travel for members to get to a central location in a country as large as Canada.

I think having to hold a meeting within five days is a bit unreasonable. So that's one of the changes we were thinking of. From what I hear from Madam Redman, upon reflection, she would consider that it might be reasonable to say ten calendar days when the House isn't in session, whether it is during the summer recess or the winter recess.

Those are the types of things we wanted to look at, to have the staff take a first cut at, so to speak, and then have the House leaders

and whips involved in discussing that to hopefully arrive at unanimity.

So that was the first thing that happened this morning. As well, I talked to the clerk personally this morning, and she indicated, as she has in the past, that there may be—she didn't say absolutely, as she hasn't drafted them yet—some minor technical wording improvements, nothing that would change the intent of what we're trying to do with these provisional standing orders, just some improvements to the specific wording. So that was something else we had wanted to explore further before we passed these.

•(1215)

Mr. Chairman, the situation now is that I have yet to be presented with any logical rationale of why we have to proceed like this. We had an agreement. The House right now is bound by the agreement that was expressed through the motion that the government House leader introduced unanimously in the House on September 20, which kept these provisional standing orders in place until November 21 to give us some time to deal with them.

They're still in existence. There's no immediate danger that they're going to run out today if we don't do this. This motion says that they be adopted as is, basically, as they are today, or as they were, I guess—it actually says “as they were on October 5”, and they haven't changed, so that's still the same as they are today—and that they be reported back to the House for a vote and adopted forthwith, even without these minor changes that I think we could arrive at giving unanimous consent for.

First, it strikes at the whole issue of trust, and second, it's a very inefficient way to run this place, to say okay, with no rationale of why we have to do this today or tomorrow. Why would we put these in place when we're all agreed now—it sounds like—that we will even put something else in place that says we can further change them in a week or a day or a month, or whatever? Of course, all of these things are always up with majority support for further change and further improvement—hopefully, improvement.

I'm more than a bit puzzled and upset that we couldn't arrive at some sort of an agreement. If the opposition is.... The only thing I'm left with is that somehow they're paranoid that we're going to pull some fast one and have these die after November 21. So other than that the opposition seems to be seized with this culture of paranoia, I don't know what the rationale is for why we have to do this now, when we seem to be agreed that there are going to be a few minor technical changes that aren't going to change the intent of what the provisional standing orders do.

It would seem to me to be, even only on the issue of efficiency.... Take out all the other: whether we did or didn't have an agreement and whether we have seen a diminution in the level of trust that's necessary between us to accomplish things on behalf of Canadians. That aside, it would seem to me reasonable and common sense that we would wait a few days.

Maybe there's some room here. I presented this in private conversation with both the official opposition House leader, the Honourable Ralph Goodale, and Madam Redman prior to this meeting, and they said maybe we could come to some good old-fashioned Canadian compromise. If they're that paranoid that something's going to happen between now and November 21, we could at least amend the motion so that we could give our staff and clerk time to interact and make these few changes that we can all agree upon and introduce it next week. Would that be unreasonable to request that type of thing?

Without beating this to death or plowing the ground over and over again, I guess I would suggest.... I'm sorry, and I apologize to the committee, I haven't had a chance to have this in sort of firm writing, but I simply throw it on the table as at least a possibility of something we could agree upon, some amendment to the effect that rather than have it the way it ends with Madam Redman's motion that we're debating, that the adoption of this motion be reported to the House forthwith, we would remove "forthwith" and put something like "following minor unanimously agreed upon amendments, but no later than one week from today, October 26, 2006". That's still almost a month prior to the November 21 deadline.

• (1220)

I'm just trying to be a little reasonable here. Let's make these few small changes. If we can amend the motion to do that, then we can all support it. That's better than having me and my colleagues stand on principle and vote against this motion. To me, it doesn't make any sense, notwithstanding that we thought we had an agreement. Even putting that aside, it doesn't make sense to proceed if we're all in agreement that there's going to be some changes to it.

So I would propose an amendment such as that. The wording could be cleaned up or altered. I just jotted this down—I don't have it prepared. But I think that if there is a legitimate concern we should put a deadline on it. One week from today, it has to be done, otherwise it reverts to the original motion.

The Chair: We have an amendment on the table. I'm going to clarify that you're comfortable with the wording, that you know the wording. We're going to proceed with the debate on the main motion while I get clarification from the clerk that the amendment is legal and presentable. But we'll continue with the debate.

[*Translation*]

M. Michel Guimond: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, okay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Could you repeat the amendment in French?

[*English*]

The Chair: One moment, please, Mr. Guimond.

• (1225)

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Lucile McGregor): I'll read it in English first, and then the interpreters will do a loose French translation.

In the second paragraph of the motion, we would be deleting the word "forthwith" and adding:

That the adoption of this motion be reported to the House following minor unanimously agreed-upon amendments, but no later than one week from today, October 26, 2006.

The Chair: Are we clear on the wording of the amendment before us?

Monsieur Guimond, are you clear?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Yes, the wording is clear.

I am certain that Mr. Hill does not want the same thing to happen to him twice. Is the amendment really in order?

[*English*]

The Chair: If it's okay, while we continue debate on the main motion, I'm going to ask for 30 seconds to get clarification that it's presentable.

Mr. Owen, you're up on debate.

Hon. Stephen Owen (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Because of the intervening amendment, I won't say the full of what I wanted to say until we get that clarification—

The Chair: Fair enough.

Hon. Stephen Owen: —ruling from you, Mr. Chair. But let me just say a few things about the general conversation we've had over the last few weeks.

First of all, I readily admit that I don't have the long parliamentary experience that—

The Chair: May I interrupt? I'm sorry, I have the ruling and I'm comfortable with the ruling that the amendment is receivable.

Continue, please.

Hon. Stephen Owen: I'm not speaking to the amendment, I'm speaking to the main motion.

I haven't had the long parliamentary experience of Mr. Hill and Mr. Lukiwski, but I suspect I've probably had more experience as a beneficiary of corporal punishment than even Mr. Lukiwski. I won't take the time of the committee to go through those early experiences. However, I don't sense in what I've seen going on.... And I take as sincere the statements of concern from the members opposite. Looking at this situation from somewhat of an outside position, because I didn't take part in any of the conversations in September, I don't see any bad faith being practised. I don't say that this wasn't felt, but my observation of it doesn't disclose that. I just meant, in my own mind, the fact that the original idea, a motion from this committee that went for concurrence, was on September 19, and then it would extend the provisional standing orders to November 21.

Clearly, it was anticipated that there would be some discussion to resolve that. I've heard nobody say that it was expected that this time would just run out and then they would lapse. It was to give space to have discussions. Those discussions, for whatever reason, didn't take place between September 19 and October 5 when we met here and had our first discussion of the concerns when the motion was presented. We heard the government's concerns expressed, but there had been no discussions initiated by the government by that time. But because there was some feeling that the time hadn't been sufficient, or for whatever reason we needed more time, we suspended discussion of the motion until two days ago, from October 5 to October 17.

I understand the chief opposition whip's office was in touch with the chief government whip's office and spoke to the whip's EA last week to try to get discussion moving on this, but there was no reply to that. There have been some discussions this morning, finally, and they have indicated two things. One is that quite aside from the process of determining the future of these provisional standing orders, concerns about their substance are quite small, and there may be some tinkering required and there may be some assistance from the clerks in that.

I do turn over in my mind, Mr. Chair, that here we are at October 19, a full month after it was first presented, and that the existence of the orders would be extended to November 21. We do have another recess week coming up. We have lots of other things to do. It's not as if we have until November 21 to actually sit down and talk about this. There are a number of things that have to go into train before then. While I accept that this amendment was put forward—finally, if I may say so, an attempt to get down to the detail of the minor adjustment that might be made—I think we should be proceeding now with this motion.

I know that members opposite are well acquainted with the notion of reverse onus. I would suggest we simply pass this motion and that the onus be reversed to those who would seek some small changes, as Monsieur Guimond has mentioned, to bring forward those changes, which our committee can always consider and agree to unanimously before or after November 21. My understanding is, and I think I heard Monsieur Guimond say, that there's nothing to stop our making adjustments as we go to these standing orders.

• (1230)

I'm not persuaded that there has been bad faith on any side in this case. I am persuaded that to everyone's mind the rules seem to have worked fairly well; there might be some wise but minor adjustments to them, and in that context I understand there's nothing to stop this committee from making those adjustments as we go forward.

I think it's time for this committee to get off this issue, in terms of the amount of time we've spent on it, and get on with our other important business.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Guimond, you were up; then it is Monsieur Godin, and then Mr. Hill.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hill worded his remarks very cautiously: he did not call us, the opposition members, paranoid. He did not call us paranoid but he did say that he did not understand our paranoia.

I simply want to tell him that my psychiatrist assured me that although I have three of four mental illnesses I am not paranoid. I used to think I was because when I used to watch Canadian football, as a good Ottawa Rough Riders supporter, I thought they were talking about me during their hurdles. So I thought I was a little paranoid, but I am not.

On the other hand, I would say to Mr. Hill—and I did not want to say this—that we, as parliamentarians and as representatives of political parties, have a responsibility to be consistent. We must be consistent with our past attitude. Let me explain.

One of the reasons why many of our fellows citizens no longer trust politics and politicians is that politicians speak out of both sides of their mouth. Obviously you are going to tell us that we, the Bloc, are in the opposition, but I have a lot more to say.

Voices: But on both sides.

Mr. Michel Guimond: This applies to the Liberals as well as to the Conservatives. Politicians say one thing when in government and another thing when they are in opposition.

It is our responsibility to be consistent. Which opposition party played a leadership role 20 months ago in advocating a change to these Standing Orders? The Conservative Party. It was fine when the Conservatives were in the opposition but now they are in power, it no longer makes sense.

That is why I am repeating what I said: We will adopt Ms. Redman's motion and then we can sit down, on the suggestion of Mr. Hill or anyone else who would like us to consider the Standing Orders, and review any necessary minor changes.

Still, I would like to come back to a point Mr. Hill stated as one of the facts that was bothering him: The five-day notice required for convening a committee during the summer, or during a recess.

I would just remind Mr. Hill that I sat on the Public Accounts Standing Committee when they were dealing with the sponsorship scandal. That Standing Order was used for convening the committee, which included Conservatives members, in the middle of summer. When the Conservatives were in the opposition, the five-day rule was not an issue, but now it is. Just one minute!

I have not had time to check but I believe the same thing happened in other committees. I may have mental illnesses but I have a good memory. The Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology met in order to hear oil companies. The Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs and International Development met in order to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, the JTFA-2 or another similar issue.

Therefore, I think that Mr. Hill should consider the number of times the Conservatives worked with us, the Bloc Québécois, and the NDP in order to use the rule that allows for four or five committee members convening a committee meeting while the House is not sitting. He will see that then the five-day notice was fine. Now that the Conservatives are in power, it would take 10 days!

He is going to have a hard time convincing me. Nevertheless, I am always willing to talk to Mr. Hill and any of my whip colleagues. I adore, I love my whip colleagues.

• (1235)

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Guimond did not demonstrate that this week with this whip, however.

We can play politics, we can deal blows. That is why we have different political parties, to demonstrate our convictions. They can do the same on their side. If we look to review procedures or similar material, I think it is important to show some openness. We have just finished talking for an hour and a half about the code of ethics with a view to making corrections, if need be. I think Mr. Hill's amendment is reasonable. He is suggesting that we adopt it while at the same time meeting members half way by proposing an amendment that will allow us to verify certain things. I am not convinced that a five- or ten-day notice is the problem, however if there are any technical problems — and I want to be clear that I am not convinced of that — then a meeting would provide an opportunity to make any corrections. I think that if there are any problems anywhere it is our responsibility to correct them. Above all, it is our duty to demonstrate openness between political parties and to listen to and respect each other. If there are no problems, we will make a decision. Mr. Hill's motion is clear: there has to be unanimity among the four parties in order for a change to be made.

Therefore, I will give the process and democracy a chance and I will support the amendment.

[English]

The Chair: The final people on my list—I'm looking around as much as I can—are Mr. Hill, and then Mr. Lukiwski.

Hon. Jay Hill: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to reply to a few things that were said on this issue by the opposition.

Upon reflection, I can understand that perhaps—and I'll take the responsibility—I was remiss in not having a conversation with the other whips. We did meet on a number of other issues between the 19th.... As I've always been quick to point out, the four whips meet whenever we need to, sometimes more than once a day. If I was remiss in not passing on to them that I sensed the logical time for the staff to meet to discuss these provisional standing orders would be the break week, as per the motion that was adopted on September 20, then I accept responsibility for not communicating that. If that had headed off all this, then I guess that's my responsibility. I should have done that. I just thought it was logical. Things are pretty hectic when this place is sitting, not only for ourselves, but for our long-suffering and overworked office staff. It just made eminent sense to me that the staff would get together.

There was one discussion between an NDP staffer and David Preston in the government House leader's office about when this meeting was going to happen. And I don't think it was motivated by paranoia at that point. It was just a legitimate concern and a

scheduling issue: When can we know this meeting is going to happen so we can all try to adjust our agendas and our schedules so we can be present to discuss this? As I said, in light of all the conversations we've had, if somehow I was neglectful in not communicating, I take responsibility.

I was going to comment on Mr. Owen's intervention when he said he's not been persuaded there was any bad faith. I understand it would be very difficult for him to be convinced of that one way or the other, because, as he pointed out quite correctly—and this is part of the difficulty of this issue—not all of us were present at the House leaders and whips' meeting where this agreement was made. Certainly he's at a disadvantage in this discussion because of that. It would be extremely difficult to convince him there was bad faith.

As for the comment by my colleague, Monsieur Guimond, about consistency, ideally we would always be consistent in everything we've done as politicians and as political parties. That doesn't happen even for opposition parties, even for the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, and I could point that out with some very quick research. Positions evolve, personal positions where we're persuaded to amend our position by force of argument in healthy and sometimes very heated debate. That's part of the whole point of debate. So there isn't always consistency in the positions we take, either as individual MPs or as political parties.

• (1240)

I would suggest to Monsieur Guimond that we're struggling with a reality right now that the Liberals struggle with from time to time when they move back and forth from opposition to government. That reality is that things do change, for a political party and for a caucus of members of Parliament, when you're faced with trying to put forward an agenda, especially in a minority government, when you're faced with the challenges of trying to keep the commitments to the Canadian people that you made in the last election campaign. We are presented with challenges, and sometimes those challenges affect the consistency of the positions we've taken in the past, even the consistency on specific rules of engagement, if I can call them that, in Parliament. That's a reality, and it's a reality that, I think we would all admit, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP will never have to face.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Oh, don't say that.

Mr. Michel Guimond: I would agree about your amendment; don't ever forget that. I predict they will vote for the next budget. I'll make this commitment right now. You know the NDP very well.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Order, please.

Thank you.

Listen, we're plowing the field, the seeds have been planted, and I think the crop has grown. Let's continue with this thing. We have to get this product to market.

Mr. Hill, the floor is still yours.

Hon. Jay Hill: I think that was just about the end of it anyway, thankfully.

Out of respect for my good friend Monsieur Godin, I will say that presumably they'll not be in government in the near future, anyway, so they're not going to be presented with that challenge—and it is a challenge. Obviously all of us, ideally, want to be as consistent as possible. I would agree with Monsieur Guimond that when we're not consistent, the general electorate often picks up on it and points it out to us, as they should, so when we do have a change in position, we have to be able to defend it.

Anyway, I think the amendment I've proposed is reasonable, and I would support that. If it's defeated—and it appears as though it may be—then we'll revert back to the original motion. And I stand by my statement that I will be voting against the original motion, not because I'm opposed to these provisional standing orders, but for the two reasons I outlined earlier.

•(1245)

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Lukiwski is next, please.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me assure my colleagues that this is not an attempt to run out the clock, but I do want to make a couple more comments for the record.

The first comment is to underscore what Mr. Hill said. Yes, out of principle I cannot vote for the original motion—not because the standing orders are not good enough, but because of the fact that we had an agreement. That's the point.

Ms. Jennings, let me put it this way. You say you have a good memory and you say you cannot remember. I would point out again that the unanimous consent given to this motion by all parties the day after the House leaders' meeting is indisputable proof, in my view, that there was an agreement. You may not recall it, but there had to be one. I can guarantee you, and you know it to be true yourself, that you would not have given consent to any motion we brought forward unless there was prior consent. I know Monsieur Guimond would not. That was proven yesterday when we tried to make a motion, as I mentioned, to put the NDP vote on record as supporting the Liberal amendment on Bill C-24. Monsieur Guimond said no, because we did not consult with him ahead of time.

All of you are disciplined enough that you know if someone stands up in the House and says “Mr. Speaker, I think you will find unanimous consent—”

The Chair: We have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Just one minute! I would like my colleague to stop putting words in our mouth. In the Standing Order on unanimous consent the word « consent » is used. He should open up a dictionary and read the definition of the words « consent » and « unanimous ».

If, for one reason or another, a party or a member does not want to give their consent, let us stop putting words in their mouth. Agreed? That should not be the tone. I do not want to make threats. I think that we should be a little more civilized among ourselves.

When I made my remarks to Mr. Hill, they were civilized remarks. I know that Mr. Hill has a thick skin and that he is capable of taking this. I may have thinner skin but I would like to say that we have our reasons and that I should not have to justify myself here.

[*English*]

The Chair: Please, Monsieur Guimond. Order. We're not open to a debate.

Mr. Lukiwski, I believe your comments were in regard to the matter on the floor. Please continue.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Yes, thank you.

The only point I was making on this is that I believe all parties are disciplined enough that if someone stood up and said we had unanimous consent for a motion, but there was not unanimous consent, one of the parties would have said no. That did not happen; everyone agreed to it. Everyone agreed, and this motion to extend the provisional standing orders until November 21 was agreed to by all parties. That, to me, is indisputable proof that there was an agreement, and that is my point.

For that reason, I think Mr. Hill's amendment is quite reasonable. Discussions have been initiated already. There has to be unanimous consent; if one party disagrees with any suggestion, it will revert back to the original motion of Ms. Redman. There's a deadline of October 26. I think that's reasonable.

The committee may come back and say they can't find unanimous consent, so it has to be the provisional orders that have been in effect for the last year and a half; that's the deal. I see no problem with that. I think this is a reasonable amendment, and it certainly satisfies me, because out of principle, I just cannot vote for the original motion.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Karen Redman: Can you call the question, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: I'm not sure we're finished debate here. I hear what you're saying, Madam Redman, but I'm going to go to Mr. Guimond.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: I would just like to quickly repeat what I have already said here. We do not have to love each other. Usually we should love the person who shares our life with us, the person who shares our bed. We should love that person a little more than we love the neighbour. Of course, if a guy sleeps with his neighbour, it is a good chance he likes his neighbour just as... I simply want to say that we do not have to love each other but we do have to respect each other. We are condemned to respect each other.

In the same vein, I would say that Mr. Godin has the right to vote for Mr. Hill's amendment. Earlier I teased him. He is capable of taking my teasing and of distinguishing between criticizing and teasing. But he does have the right to vote with Mr. Hill, Ms. Redman has the right to table a motion, and we have the right to vote with her. The motion will be passed by six yeas to 5 nays, and then we can go and eat.

Thank you.

•(1250)

[English]

The Chair: Is there further debate on this issue? I have no further names on my list. Is there further debate, or is the committee ready to call the question on the amendment to the main motion?

You have a point of order, Mr. Hill.

Hon. Jay Hill: It's not that I want to prolong this, but I'd like a recorded vote.

The Chair: We will prepare to do exactly that. I will ask whether we need to read the amendment or dispense.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): I'm not going to.... Actually, I have it right here; never mind.

The Chair: May I ask a question while our clerk is preparing for the recorded vote? If the amendment should pass, how will the chair be informed that there has been unanimous agreement achieved? Will there be a letter? I will know; I appreciate that. It will be in the form of a letter signed by all whips. Thank you. That's the case, just for clarification.

Can we read the amended amendment to the motion, please?

The Clerk: I'll read the motion first and then the amendment. The motion is "That this committee recommends that the Standing Orders in effect on October 5, 2006, including the provisional Standing Orders, be made permanent, and that the adoption of this motion be reported to the House forthwith."

The question is on the amendment of Mr. Hill that the motion be amended by deleting the word "forthwith" and adding the following: "following minor unanimously agreed upon amendments, but no later than one week from", and I've added the date today, "October 19, that is October 26, 2006."

The Chair: We're voting on the amendment first.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: We are reverting back to the main motion as originally presented by Madam Redman. Is there further discussion on the main motion?

Is the committee ready for the question?

Mr. Scott Reid: On a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: I have no objection to going to the question right now, but it would be my desire, and I suspect that of my colleagues, if, as I anticipate, this goes through, that we would file a dissenting report. I'm not sure what the procedure is for doing that.

The motion calls for the adoption of the motion being reported to the House forthwith, right? I assume it's a report from the committee, and we'll have to file a dissenting report.

•(1255)

The Chair: We're going to have a ruling on that.

It is allowable. The chair rules that it is allowable that there be a dissenting report.

Does the committee agree with that? My ruling is that it's allowed. I want to know if anybody's challenging my decision. No?

Monsieur Guimond is going to challenge my decision. There's no debate on my decision.

Mr. Michel Guimond: No, no, it's just a question. I have a question.

The Chair: There's no debate on my decision. I'm sorry.

Mr. Michel Guimond: What is the length of the report? There's a report of five lines. Will the dissenting report be two lines, one line, one line and a half...?

The Chair: All right, that's fair: length of report, deadline....

One paragraph?

Deadline?

Mr. Scott Reid: Marlene, I can't tell you.... Give me time to come back, and then I can give it to you. But that's going to slow down our ability to get through the original motion today.

You notice I've been very quiet. It hasn't been my goal to slow this process down or anything; I've been very respectful. My goal now is not to do anything disrespectful. It's just....

The Chair: A dissenting report, approximately one paragraph in length.

Mr. Guimond, do you have anything further?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: I believe Standing Orders state that a minority report cannot be as long as the committee's report. I will check that. I agree to reporting to the House, but we are reporting a motion to the House. I do not think this is a committee report. I will not appeal your decision, because I am getting tired of this. Besides being the official languages censor, I am going to be the procedural censor. I am tired of this. However, I do not think this is a committee report.

First, if it is a report, it is exactly five lines long. It will not be a one paragraph report. Minority reports are provided for in the Standing Orders. Second, we will have to decide when the minority report will be presented. I maintain, however, that it is not a minority report, that this is not a committee report. Honestly!

[English]

The Chair: I'm allowing a dissenting report to go forward. That's my ruling. If you want to challenge my ruling, then put the challenge on the table.

If the Standing Orders suggest that a dissenting report has to be less in length than the original report, then I think we can respect that. Five lines is a paragraph to me. This will be a paragraph less one word. I think we're splitting hairs here. I don't see the value in continuing this conversation.

If you want to challenge the chair, I'm open for a challenge. Is there a challenge?

Hon. Jay Hill: On a point of order—I'm not challenging the chair.

My point of order is I thought we had agreed to proceed with the question before the time runs out. It's now three minutes to one, and if we're going to have the vote, then let's have the vote.

The Chair: That's where I am right now. Is there any further debate?

I believe there has been no further debate on the main motion. Are we ready for the question?

Hon. Jay Hill: I want a recorded vote on this as well.

The Chair: We have a call for a recorded vote.

Would the dissenting report be prepared by tomorrow? Because we will be....

It will be reported then, because it's "forthwith", just so everybody's clear.

Okay, I call the question.

Would you please read the original motion, and we will have a recorded vote.

The Clerk: The question is on the motion:

That this committee recommends that the Standing Orders in effect on October 5, 2006, including the provisional Standing Orders, be made permanent, and that the adoption of this motion be reported to the House forthwith.

The Chair: I'll leave the clerk to call the names.

● (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: I will tell you how this works: you look at your list and you ask the people on it if they are voting yes or if they are voting no.

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Guimond, you obviously missed your medication this morning.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: Before we end the meeting, I would like to remind you of Tuesday's meeting. We're again going back to clause-by-clause on Bill C-16. Monday at 11 a.m. is the deadline for any amendments that members might have.

Thank you very much.

Members, have a great day.

The meeting is adjourned.

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