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Standing Committee on Finance

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Monday, January 28, 2008

—
Chair

Mr. Rob Merrifield

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•(1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC)): We have the clock at beyond 3:30 and we have a quorum. With that, we'll call the meeting to order.

We have some fairly interesting discussion to take place. We have four motions we want to deal with immediately, and then we'll go to an in camera session with regard to our report and the finalization of our report on the pre-budget consultation.

With that, Mr. Crête, do you have a motion on the floor? Is that what you want to speak to? Go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Turner is not here but you received the text of the motion I am submitting. I don't know if it is necessary to reread it in its entirety. In fact, the purpose of this motion is that the committee recommend to the government, in view “of the serious crisis in the forestry and manufacturing sectors, that it implement [...] an improved assistance plan[...].” I will let you read the entire motion yourselves.

This motion was tabled within the prescribed time period, and personally, I would like us to examine it as quickly as possible. We can debate it immediately if you think it advisable. If Mr. Turner arrives, depending on what happens, we can then devote our time to his motions and proceed to study the report.

I move the adoption of the motion I have introduced.

[English]

The Chair: We all have the motion on the floor, which Mr. Crête has officially moved. We've had the proper notification of that motion. We'll open the floor for discussion on that motion.

Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): In the interest of trying to accommodate the concerns expressed in the motion by Mr. Crête, I wonder whether he would entertain what I would hope he would consider to be a friendly motion. Next week we commence a study of his concerns with respect to forestry and manufacturing, and he could incorporate that with Mr. Turner's motion, so that both studies would commence simultaneously.

Mr. Crête's motion calls for a significant expenditure on the part of the Government of Canada and may well be warranted. Probably, given the laissez-faire approach of this government, it may well be an appropriate motion and appropriate sums of money that he has

allocated. But it seems to me that we should at least receive witnesses, at least study this matter, and that it should be connected to Mr. Turner's motion simultaneously.

The Chair: Is there any other discussion on the motion?

Mr. Crête.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: This motion is independent from Mr. Turner's motion. Of course, I would like to see us vote on it as quickly as possible because of the urgency of the situation.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): I just wonder if Mr. McKay could specify which of Mr. Turner's motions he's implying....

Hon. John McKay: It's the one on income trusts.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I don't see that it has anything to do with your motion.

The Chair: They're two different issues, I believe.

Mr. McCallum.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Turner's motion was presented on December 11, so it certainly can be considered today. It calls for hearings on the subject of income trusts. Our proposal would be to combine the income trust hearings with hearings described by Mr. Crête. I think if Mr. Crête insists on a vote on his motion at this moment, then we cannot support it. But after we finish with his motion and we get on to Mr. Turner's motion, he might want to join forces to have hearings on his issues and on income trusts at the same time, starting next week.

The Chair: Mr. Pacetti.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): I don't have a problem with the form of the motion. I'm just a bit uncomfortable passing a motion without undertaking an actual study. I think Mr. Crête has a distinct advantage because he was on the industry committee and prepared a report. But without a study, I don't see how we can approve a plan at \$1.5 billion. So if we can somehow find a way to amend this in a friendly fashion and undertake a study before we recommend to the government that \$1.5 billion be disbursed.... I don't see how we can—

The Chair: I'm not going to go too long before I call for a vote.

Mr. Crête, do you want to finish off?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: I would like to remind the members of the committee that before Christmas, we held hearings on the value of the dollar and its effect on the economy. The federal government has announced a program destined to come to the assistance of the regions affected by the crisis in the forestry and manufacturing sectors. It seems to me that all of the criteria have been met.

If the committee is ready to vote on the motion now, I am willing to do so. If we have to hold a hearing to have it passed, let's do so, but we won't study it for months. At the latest, the government must take what we are suggesting into account in its next budget. There are some very reasonable things here. This doesn't mean that the government will approve everything to the letter. But that as it may, as a committee, we consider this relevant.

• (1540)

[*English*]

The Chair: Just for the committee, Mr. Crête, how long a study would you envision on this?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: For my part, I am ready to vote immediately. However, if the committee absolutely wants to hear witnesses, one or two additional hearings will be necessary.

[*English*]

The Chair: You're saying one day or two days. Okay, fair enough. So we're hearing that there would be a maximum of a couple of meetings on it.

Everyone understands what we're voting on. We have a motion in front of us.

I'm ready to call the vote. All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now we'll move on. I believe we have three other notices of motion. They're on the floor. Mr. Turner has a couple, and we have one from Mr. Dykstra, who is not here.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): I'll move Mr. Dykstra's motion, if I can.

The Chair: I asked the clerk about this earlier, and if it is the will of the committee....

Everybody has received it. Is there any objection?

Mr. Dykstra will be here in a few minutes, but we have a motion.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Let's leave it to the last. Let's deal with Mr. Turner's first.

The Chair: Okay. Is that fair enough? He's supposed to be here in a few minutes.

Mr. Mike Wallace: If Mr. Dykstra shows up from his previous engagement—

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Dykstra is detained for about 15 minutes, so if we deal with his motion when he comes, that would be fair.

In the meantime, Mr. Turner, I'm not asking you to, but if you wish to, we would entertain the motion you've given notice of motion on.

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This motion is pretty simple, and it goes to the heart of—

The Chair: About which one are you talking?

Hon. Garth Turner: I'm talking about the motion relating to income trusts.

The issue is reasonably simple, as I said, because the government, when it was campaigning, obviously, adopted a very solemn promise to Canadians that income trusts would not be taxed. The Minister of Finance changed his mind. He based that decision upon his assertion that there was tax leakage taking place because of the existing status of income trusts.

Now more than a year has passed—in fact almost a year and a half has now passed—since that particular assertion was made. There is a body of evidence, a body of fact, that now exists in the marketplace and in financial markets. We have some evidence now of the repercussions of that decision. I think it is time this committee had a look at whether the assertion of a tax leakage is reasonable or not. Can it be proven or not?

The gravity of the promise that was broken I think really underscores our need to have a look at whether the Minister of Finance was correct in his assumptions about the marketplace, because there is conflicting evidence. I think because the lives of so many individual Canadians were impacted, and we've seen as well a hollowing-out of the income trust sector, particularly as related to energy trusts by non-Canadian entities who are non-taxpayers, it really behooves us to look objectively, impartially, non-politically at the whole issue of whether—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Garth Turner: —the Minister of Finance was right in his statements to Canadians or whether he in fact had his own political agenda.

That's it, Mr. Chairman. I would ask my esteemed colleagues to support this, because there are many Canadians who really would like to have answers to these quite simple but compelling questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Turner.

We have a motion, and you are moving that motion, I understand. You didn't say so, but I want to make sure that's clear.

Hon. Garth Turner: I am moving it.

The Chair: All right. We have another motion on the floor. Does anyone want to speak to that?

I see Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies (MacLeod, CPC): Please let me continue in the spirit of non-partisan debate. I shall try my best.

This is an issue that has been debated at length, both in committee and in the House of Commons, and if I'm not mistaken, it was voted on and approved in the House of Commons, where every member of the House had the opportunity to state their constituents' views. Those views have been expressed.

We have moved far beyond that. As Mr. Crête just mentioned, we have moved to issues of immediate impact—jobs in the forestry sector and the manufacturing sector. That's why we supported Mr. Crête's motion: it is important. To go back and re-plough this old ground does not make any sense to us whatsoever. In fact, I would be embarrassed to tell my constituents that we were going back to deal with an issue that was voted on and approved in the House of Commons instead of talking about how we can help constituents who have lost their jobs, how we can help to grow sectors that are in difficult times right now.

We are looking at extremely volatile markets. We would be better discussing whether or not this government is doing the right things. Let's have an open debate about that. Let's see what we can do better to help our constituents, rather than going back and talking about an old issue that only two people in the House of Commons seem to be concerned about. Unfortunately, the two of them are sitting in this committee right now.

Let's talk about the future. Let's talk about how we can make Canada better instead of backtracking.

• (1545)

The Chair: Now we have Mr. Pacetti.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just to correct Mr. Menzies' comments, during the pre-budget consultations, as little as a month ago, during our tour of Canada, on which there were only three of us present, especially in the city of Calgary there were a couple of people who did appear before the committee and they wanted us to open this up. So I don't believe this is an issue that's closed and finished with. Especially in the energy sector—and perhaps, Mr. Chairman, you can help me, because that's your province of origin—there is still a willingness to pursue this matter, and there is still a willingness to see if there are any problems with the way the finance minister provided those estimates regarding tax leakage and tax losses.

The only problem I would have with this amendment would be the number of hearings. I would like to limit that, if possible, to perhaps three or four. I'm not sure what Mr. Turner is requesting, so through you, Mr. Chair, could we clear that up? Then I would probably be able to support this motion.

The Chair: I'm going to ask the mover what his intent would be regarding the number of hearings he thinks would facilitate the motion.

Hon. Garth Turner: It would not be a huge number, Mr. Chairman, but I certainly think a couple of meetings would be a very good way to deal with this issue.

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, you, yourself, joined the committee after we conducted investigative hearings into the impact of the income trust decision. Most of the members who are here were here for that study. We did in fact produce a report from that study.

As Mr. Menzies has indicated, this is extremely well-tilled soil. We have gone over this backwards, forwards, and sideways. I cannot see any benefit to this at the present time.

I believe Canadians have moved on. Mr. Turner's motion contemplates which trusts have been purchased, but he hasn't contemplated the companies that did not convert into trusts and how much of the public tax revenue was not lost, and the protection of Canadian companies from converting into trusts, which would be extremely bad for Canada's productivity and Canada's economy moving forward. He's taken a one-sided look at this. He wants to go backwards.

I encourage and implore committee members to look forward and deal with issues that are relevant to Canadians today. Let's have a positive impact on our communities.

Thank you.

The Chair: I didn't see who was first.

It will be Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Losing money is always relevant to Canadians. If I lost money a year and a half ago, I'd still be pretty concerned. I'd have been concerned six months ago, and I'm concerned today, so this issue is relevant. It will be relevant in part because of the very point Mr. Turner's motion speaks to. It speaks to the issue that the Minister of Finance of Canada came into this committee, put up charts, and said he expected that if we carried on the way we were carrying on, we were going to lose \$500 million in tax revenue. He was roundly criticized both in the press and by committee witnesses as asserting a falsehood.

Mr. Turner's motion speaks to that incredulity on the part of Canadians. It speaks to that issue. So Canadians have not moved on, Mr. Del Mastro, through you, Mr. Chair. The markets are volatile. We are in volatile times. A lot of the benefit and value of owning trust units has been bled out by the actions of the minister and of this government. So these hearings would test the proposition the Minister of Finance put before this committee, based on which, with the machinations of the votes in the House, he was able to successfully get it through the House.

We do not believe his proposition. We have very good reasons for not believing his proposition, and we are shocked and appalled—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. John McKay: —that he is not willing, through his other members here, to let us test his proposition.

• (1550)

The Chair: Mr. McCallum.

Hon. John McCallum: This is just a footnote to those wise words.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. John McCallum: The other thing people should not forget is that all we got from the minister was a blacked-out document. It was an insult to Canadians and to members of this committee that he wouldn't even show us the numbers. The numbers are wrong—we know that—but at least he could show them to us rather than blacking them out. So I think it's a matter also of accountability and transparency, which this government has lacked.

Another point is that since the decision was made, we've seen, for example, BCE taken over by a combination of private equity and pension plans. If that transaction goes forward, BCE will pay no tax. So it's become self-evident that this was a losing proposition from the point of view of tax revenue, a losing proposition from the point of view of productivity, but I think the minds of the people over there are made up, so I'm not sure it's worth prolonging the discussion.

The Chair: Yes, that's what I mean. We can debate this forever, but if we go forward in the study, I'm sure we'll have all kinds of time for that.

We have Dean Del Mastro. I think we've heard enough.

Dean.

An hon. member: Call the vote.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: We'll call the vote. That's fine. The only thing I'd point out, Mr. Chair, is that every single government in every province agreed with the federal government's assertion, and that's the only thing I'd like to point out again. They want to go backwards; let's go forward.

The Chair: Okay, let's not debate anymore.

Are we all clear on the motion?

(Motion negatived)

The Chair: Monsieur Crête.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Concerning the previous motion which we passed, that is to say my own, we had talked about holding a hearing to debate it. Will that be on Wednesday of this week?

[*English*]

The Chair: If you mean for this motion, no.

I would just remind everyone that we have a motion by this committee to have this document—the report—which takes precedence, done by February 8. It will be the priority this week and next to make sure this is accomplished. As soon as that takes place, then I believe we can facilitate—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: As for this study, we must have time to read the report. We only received it today. If there are divergent opinions, we will probably clarify the rules but we don't necessarily have to discuss this on Wednesday of this week, nor next Monday or Wednesday. In my view, we can raise the matter of the motion I have introduced at a meeting so that this gets settled and we can devote the other hearings to the report on the prebudget consultations.

[*English*]

The Chair: My understanding regarding your motion is that it was different from the pre-budget report, but it is something we will take up as soon as we are finished with the business. That really shouldn't take very long, because I'm hoping to get most of the committee's work on the report completed this week. I know that's optimistic, but we'll get into that later in the meeting when we go in camera. I would assume that we could then get into your motion immediately after that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: We agreed earlier but perhaps we misunderstood each other. I had understood that we would be devoting one meeting to the motion as soon as possible so that we could then pass it. I was ready to vote on it immediately. I would like us to schedule a meeting as quickly as possible to discuss it, either this Wednesday or next Monday. As to the report as such, by the time we have studied it and proposed amendments, this may take us to...

● (1555)

[*English*]

The Chair: I believe Wednesday of next week would be the time that would facilitate that meeting.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: I think that next Wednesday, Mr. Chairman, we will be finalizing the comprehensive report, which is to be tabled on February 8. That will be the priority. I would prefer that the meeting to debate the motion I introduced, which people were ready to discuss with a view to passing it, be held either this Wednesday or next Monday, and that this be done within the context of the consultation.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Pacetti.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order, on the notice of motion, from what I can recall, I had suggested that we put in a couple of meetings, and everybody voted that down. When you asked for a vote, you didn't ask for it on an amended motion. You asked on the motion as is, and my understanding is that members who voted for it voted for this motion.

Now, all of a sudden, we have meetings scheduled. Nobody accepted my amended motion, and now, all of a sudden, we're going back. Members from—

The Chair: No, let me—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Let's clarify this...

[*English*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: I'm saying it was “as is”.

The Chair: Are you finished?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: That is my point of order.

The Chair: Okay, fair enough, and I'm going to try to clarify it.

That's why I asked the mover of the motion how long it would take him to accomplish what he wanted in the motion, and his reply to the committee was “two meetings”. That's what I understood.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: I said yesterday that I was ready to vote on it immediately and I wanted to know if some of you wanted to add motions. If everyone is ready to vote on it right now let us do so and the matter will be settled. We have to clarify the situation. The motion was tabled within the prescribed deadline and we can vote on it. I had thought that people might want additional time to clear up certain points or call witnesses but if we are all in agreement to vote on it and consider it immediately let us vote on the substance without debating it and we won't have to devote any more time to it. We can simply vote on it now.

[*English*]

Hon. Garth Turner: Mr. Chairman, could the clerk tell us what we actually voted on?

The Chair: Just hang on. Give me a minute with the clerk and I'll let you know what we come up with.

I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I will review the blues to make sure exactly what definition was presented before the committee, and we'll deal with this on Wednesday afternoon at the beginning of the meeting to make sure we're clear. If it is as Mr. Crête says, we can do a motion right away. If not, then we'll discuss it at that time, and I'll make a ruling.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: We have to clarify the situation in order to be certain that we understand each other.

I am moving the motion as it stands. If somebody wants us to devote some time to it let him introduce an amendment and we will debate it. It will either be accepted or rejected but then we will vote on the motion in its entirety, amended or not.

I think I am in part responsible for this confusion. In order to simplify the situation let us vote on whether or not members are ready to vote on the motion. If someone has an amendment to move let him do so; for instance, someone may want us to devote one or two meetings to it, and we will see whether this will be accepted or not. I come back to the fact that it is the committee that recommends these measures and I of course hope that they will be passed as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

The Chair: I understand that's your position on it, and as the chair, I want to make sure we follow exactly what we moved in that motion.

My understanding was—and I spoke about this with the clerk—that I asked for a definition of how many meetings the mover of the motion required to accomplish this. The decision was one or two. That was what I heard, so I want to go back into the blues to make sure the committee heard this. I asked the mover for that definition.

•(1600)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Right from the outset I said that I was willing to vote on it immediately and willing to consider the possibility of holding meetings to discuss the matter. I am not the one who suggested that we add something; I was willing to vote on it immediately.

[*English*]

The Chair: At this stage, I'm going to say let's look at the blues. You may be absolutely right. I'll look at the blues on Wednesday morning. It's not going to change anything. We'll make a ruling on it one way or another.

Fair enough?

You're talking about this matter? I've made a ruling on this matter.

Hon. John McCallum: I just want to ask you a simple question.

If you read this motion—

The Chair: I know. Let's not get into that, because I tried to define the motion by the mover.

I've already ruled on what I'm going to do with this.

Hon. John McCallum: It'll take ten seconds.

The Chair: Okay, you have ten seconds.

Hon. John McCallum: It's a different question.

If you just read this, it sounds as though the Conservative members have voted clearly, without qualification, to recommend billions of dollars of additional spending to the House at the earliest opportunity.

Is that not correct?

Mr. Ted Menzies: On a point of order, Mr. Chair. That's not the statement you made.

The Chair: That's not how I interpreted it. That's why I'm going to go back and make sure that was clear.

I realize what you said, but I realized what I had ruled on as far as the vote. That's the end of that one.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. I am the one who asked that we undertake a study—

Some hon. members: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: Order. Mr. Pacetti has a point of order.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: I voted against the motion because nobody accepted my amendment, plain and simple. I think we voted for this already. I don't know why we have to go back. It's very clear.

The Chair: That's why I have ruled that I'm going to go back and look at the blues to make sure we get it right. Fair enough?

That's the end of that one.

Mr. Turner, do you have another motion?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Chairman, I have a question. Will we be discussing it at the beginning of Wednesday's meeting?

[*English*]

The Chair: It will be Wednesday at 3:30 p.m.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Yes, Wednesday afternoon. Will we be discussing it at the beginning of the meeting?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, we'll deal with this before the meeting.

Mr. Turner, do you have another motion?

Hon. Garth Turner: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I do have a motion. It goes to the heart of our tax system, and that is the fair treatment of every taxpayer under the law.

It came to the attention of all of us late last year that certain taxpayers in one constituency of Canada, those represented by the Minister of Natural Resources, had actually been granted an exemption from capital gains tax on shares they had been granted by their employer. They were the only ones in Canada who were granted that exemption from actually having to pay a tax that is required under the tax code of Canada. The taxpayers in all other 307 constituencies in Canada are required to pay. It seems highly irregular and very annoying to taxpayers in my constituency—and I'm sure to everyone else around this table—that they may have to pay capital gains taxes on shares acquired from their employer under certain circumstances whereas Mr. Lunn's constituents do not have to pay that tax.

My motion is to have a look into how this issue arose and whether all Canadians should have the same treatment under the tax code of Canada and as stipulated by the Canadian taxpayers' bill of rights. It's very cut and dried. Our duty here is to make sure that all of us in fact are treated absolutely equally by our government.

The Chair: I understand you are moving this. I want to clarify for the committee, right off the bat, how many meetings you would like to dedicate to this if this were to proceed.

Hon. Garth Turner: Mr. Chairman, I don't really know the depth of the issue. I'm assuming that we would probably want a couple of meetings anyway to look at this. I'm not proposing anything on a massive scale, but I think it is an issue of fairness, and we would require at least a couple of meetings to try to nail down and determine the fairness of this for all.

The Chair: Okay. We understand that the mover is suggesting that we have two meetings to accomplish this. The motion is on the floor.

We'll open the floor to debate.

Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: We should comment a little bit on this.

I think one should be cautious about bringing this sort of thing forward without recognizing that one of the people we will have to have talk to us is the member for Wascana, who was directed by the former Prime Minister to fix that problem. It is a long-standing problem. Unfortunately, it wasn't dealt with, either negatively or positively, at the time the then Prime Minister told the member for Wascana to fix it. It would be interesting to find out the thoughts of the former government when we discuss this.

Once again, we're looking at a very narrow focus. If we can reach forward to the next motion I hope we're going to talk about—and that's on tax competitiveness—I think that would provide us with an opportunity to, as I said before, talk about what is important to all of Canada right now, and that's tax competitiveness and the regimes we're in. If it's right or it's wrong, let's talk about it openly. Let's bring in more companies than just one individual.

If you can pardon me for talking while you're interrupting, Mr. Turner, I would like to continue by saying that to broaden this to having more than just one vendetta from one member of one party would be a far more effective use of this committee's time.

•(1605)

The Chair: Mr. Pacetti.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Again, Mr. Chair, perhaps not enough members of this committee travelled with the finance committee, but during the pre-budget consultations we did have a couple of groups.... One group in particular, again in Calgary—WestJet—had a problem with stock options being taxable, and there was a proposal put forward. I don't understand how you can say this issue is of a narrow scope. It's disappointing to hear it from the parliamentary secretary. In my riding there are some people who are paying taxes on their stock options. Maybe it's an anomaly just in my riding, but I know there are others in other ridings on the island of Montreal, because I prepare taxes; I'm an accountant by trade.

This is something that affects everybody. At a minimum, we should speak to somebody from CRA, and after hearing from CRA, we should hear from somebody from the Department of Finance to see whether other hearings are required. I don't understand how you can say this issue is of a narrow scope.

The Chair: Mr. Crête.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: I suggest that we postpone the vote on this motion for two weeks so that we can evaluate the situation accurately. I refers to “[...] the recent Cabinet decision to issue a remission order cancelling the obligation [...]”. This is a very specific, very particular case. It would be advisable that we set aside some time to examine it before voting on the motion. We could vote after having concluded our study.

Can we move to table the motion?

[*English*]

The Chair: Is that an amendment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: It could be an amendment or a motion to postpone the vote on this motion until our analysis is over and we have tabled our report on the budget consultations.

[*English*]

The Chair: I will put this to the mover of the motion. If the mover would be willing to put this off for two weeks, then I would accept that. If not, I would accept that as—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: We would be voting on the motion in two weeks after having examined the implications.

[*English*]

Hon. Garth Turner: I would accept that, pending circulation of information to committee members, so we could defer the vote.

The Chair: Do we have agreement on deferring for two weeks?

Mr. Pacetti.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: This is just a question: who's going to circulate the information so that we're all up to speed on the background?

The Chair: What information would you like circulated?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Monsieur Crête is correct in saying that perhaps this is very specific to one case, and perhaps by looking at some background information we can decide whether we should pursue it or have more than one meeting.

The Chair: Do we just need, maybe, more time to do that on our own?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Okay.

The Chair: Fair enough. So we'll bring it back in two weeks' time, Mr. Turner.

We have one other motion. Mr. Dykstra has put this forward. He's not here. We have others who will do it, but we'd need—

• (1610)

Mr. Mike Wallace: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...discuss it with Mr. Dykstra, if I have consensus....

The Chair: Do I have consensus to deal with that motion?

Hon. Garth Turner: Was this tabled today?

The Chair: No, it was in on Friday, but it was never sent out until this morning.

Hon. Garth Turner: Well, we shouldn't deal with it.

The Chair: It was in within the proper time, that's the thing. It was 36 hours. Remember, we debated that? It's within the 36 hours, and that's the problem with it.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Look, this is my original motion, and I've been discussing with Rick how to present this.

The Chair: Okay, but before we get into it—

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: No, but if we're going to go to our pre-budget consultations, I think we should just defer it until Wednesday, until Mr. Dykstra is here. There is no rush anyway.

The Chair: That's fine. Are we good with that? Okay. Let's defer that. I see consensus on that one.

I will just declare that we move in camera and away we go.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Once in a while you get to do that.

The Chair: Yes, once in a while. You don't get much authority in this committee, I realize that.

One assistant per member is allowed, so I would ask the remainder to vacate the room and then we'll proceed.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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