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# **Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, November 14, 2007**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Diane Marleau**

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## Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

Wednesday, November 14, 2007

• (1530)

[English]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Richard Rumas):** Good afternoon.

I'm here in my capacity as clerk of the committee to preside over the election of the chair. I'm ready to hear motions to that effect.

Mr. Moore.

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** I'd like to nominate Diane Marleau as chair.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Mr. Moore that Madam Marleau be elected as chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare Madam Marleau elected chair of this committee.

The next order of business is the election of the two vice-chairs.

Mr. Albrecht.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** I'd like to nominate Daryl Kramp as first vice-chair, in absentia.

**The Clerk:** It is nominated that Daryl Kramp be elected as first vice-chair of this committee.

**Mr. James Moore:** There are two vice-chairs.

**The Clerk:** No, one at a time, sequentially.

Are there any other nominations?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I will ask my new colleague under the committee's directorate, Michel Marcotte, to preside over the election of the second vice-chair.

[Translation]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michel Marcotte):** Thank you. I am now ready to receive nominations for the position of second vice-chair.

Mr. Nadeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** I nominate Mr. Angus.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michel Marcotte):** Are there any other nominations?

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

**The Clerk:** I now ask Madam Marleau to come to the chair.

**The Chair (Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.)):** We have routine motions for the formation of the committee. I believe the chair has copies to go around. Basically, it governs the number of witnesses; the witnesses; the time; the subcommittee on agenda and procedure; reduced quorum; distribution of documents. Basically, it's exactly the way it was during the last session. At least, this is what I'm told.

Mr. Silva.

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I simply want to say that I'm new to the committee and am delighted to be a member of the committee. As well, I congratulate you on your election as chair.

It seems to me, from speaking to past members, that they were quite content with the business of the past sessions, in terms of the procedures and how it transpired. I think we should keep the same procedures. This will save us time for debate and adjourn the meeting.

**The Chair:** Are there any other comments?

Mr. Warkentin.

• (1535)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Madam Chair, I want to get clarification in terms of minority reports. What is the standard? I don't see it outlined in routine motions. I'm wondering if I could get some clarification as to what the current practice of our committee is.

**The Chair:** Mr. Rumas will address that.

**The Clerk:** In the past, it has not been the practice of committees to adopt a motion at the beginning of a session or the beginning of a Parliament. That is usually done when the committee is finished with the draft report and goes through the motions for the adoption of it. If then one of the members or one of the parties signals that they have a dissenting or complementary opinion, it's done at that time.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Can I make a suggestion just for the sake of clarification? I know we've had this debate on one of the other committees I sit on. Could we set out right now just the assurance that any party would have the opportunity to make an additional minority report to any document as long as it was done within the 72 hours when that was tabled, if that would be—

**The Chair:** My understanding is that it's procedure and it's understood that there can always be a minority report. It's usually an appendix put on after the signature of the chair of the committee. It's added after that.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Sure, and if we could just get the assurance—I don't know, maybe it's not the best thing to do through routine motions—that 72 hours would be allowed for that particular process to take place....

**The Chair:** No, no, that's the way it's always been done before.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Perfect.

**The Chair:** I don't see any problems with that.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I do appreciate that, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**The Chair:** All those in favour of routine motions?

Monsieur Nadeau.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** If we discussed the motions one at a time, it might be somewhat quicker.

**The Chair:** These motions are exactly the same as the ones from the last session.

[*English*]

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** For the sake of my own clarification and memory, what is the speaking order arranged to be?

**The Chair:** My understanding, if I recall from the past session, is that it was Liberals, Bloc, Conservatives, NDP, Liberals, and then it alternates more. If you look, it's down here: Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois....

I just remember the way we did it before, which went quite well.

**Mr. James Moore:** Liberal, Bloc, Conservative, NDP, Liberal, Conservative, and thereafter five minutes, including—

**The Chair:** That's right. That's the way it was before.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** So we're just going to continue—

**The Chair:** Yes, I think that worked well.

Are there any other questions? *Ça va bien?*

Mr. Silva.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Madam Chair, as a point of clarification, I think we're just going to adopt the procedures as is from the past, which is fine. The only clarification that I think is acceptable to the members is that when we talked about staff in the in camera meetings, if we could also have the whip staff as well, because sometimes they're needed, from every party, if there's a need for them to come to—

**The Chair:** I don't think there's a problem with that.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Okay, is everyone in agreement with that?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** One additional staff member per party.

**The Chair:** Yes, which would be from the whip's office.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Per House office, whoever that person would be.

**The Chair:** Okay, I don't have any problems with that.

**Mr. James Moore:** If you don't work for the whip.

**The Chair:** Guess who does?

That said, all those in favour?

You want a motion? No, we don't really need a motion; they're all in favour.

Passed. No need to spend a lot of time. We all know what's there.

Before we adjourn, though, I'd like us to take a few minutes to think in terms of future business. I think we have time to discuss it now. There are a number of things we have to deal with as a committee.

One thing is the report from Madame Barrados. I believe it was referred to the House, was it this week, yesterday, Tuesday? The researchers would be able to tell us that. I believe the researchers would be ready with information for the committee members, so I'm wondering whether the committee would be interested in meeting with Madame Barrados at next Monday's meeting, at 3:30, if the research people are ready with the information so that the committee members can be updated.

Monsieur Nadeau.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** You have just proposed something concerning Ms. Barrados, but simply to make sure that I am following the discussion accurately, I would like to know if we are proposing topics right now.

● (1540)

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** I do not know if you have any other topics in mind, but for my part, I want to propose the topic of buildings. We had asked for a moratorium, but we know what happened. Perhaps everyone's definition of "moratorium" is not the same. I absolutely want us to get back to the question of sale and lease-back. I know that Mr. Moore must be really impatient at the very thought.

**The Chair:** There was one other matter to discuss.

[*English*]

If I can remind you, there was also the issue of pay and benefits. I think that's a very difficult one, and I think we should pursue it.

If you recall, at the end of the last session in June we had asked that the clerk or his representative appear before the committee and we could get an update on what's gone on with this file since we last dealt with it. We also wrote a letter to the Auditor General asking her to look into it. So there were two things that happened at the very end. My feeling is that there are still major problems with pay and benefits across the public service, and I think it's important for us to address that.

Mr. Warkentin.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** On that point, I recall from the final meetings that some of the witnesses we brought forward really weren't the witnesses we should have brought forward, because we didn't seem to get the information we were looking for.

Has there been any correspondence between you or the clerk in terms of suggestions about who might be better to talk to on that?

**The Chair:** We can get the researchers to look at that, but I think we still have to talk with the officials of Treasury Board and Public Works as to what is happening. I don't recall getting anything official on this over the summer, but I was informed that Treasury Board did do a study on pay and benefits. It might be nice if they could update us on what they found.

**Mr. James Moore:** I would think they have information they're prepared to give.

**The Chair:** That's very good. Are there any other suggestions?

Go ahead, Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** One of the things I'd like to look at is that we have had the sale of nine federal buildings, and a number of others are on the list—oh, it was seven. It was seven, of course; we had to pull two of them at the last minute.

I think it would be incumbent upon us to look at the overall plan for the rest of them.

**The Chair:** We should, as soon as we can; yes.

Go ahead, Mr. Albrecht.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** I think it's important that we continue to look at the issues of small and medium-sized enterprises with the new regional offices that have been opened up and see how those are progressing, and there is also the whole issue of greening government. Those are issues we looked at last time, and I think it would be good to have an update.

I don't want to disappoint Mr. Kramp in neglecting accrual accounting as a further study—

**The Chair:** Well, you won't disappoint Mr. Kramp, because I will tell you that Mr. Kramp and I and a few others were called in on an ad hoc committee to look at proposals for accrual accounting. My understanding is that two new meetings are scheduled with the ad hoc committee. I think it's Monday of next week; I forget the exact dates. I was just advised of that.

It might be a good idea at some point to bring it back here, but right now it's at the ad hoc committee, and they're just showing us some of their suggestions at this point. We can discuss that as well.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** I do think, Madam Chair, that the key issue is considering the small and medium enterprises, the medium-sized businesses. We all want to encourage economic development, and I think those are some of the key moving factors in that.

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

We have a list now. We've got the report from Maria Barrados. She'll be coming Monday. The clerk will find out, but my understanding is that she's quite ready and prepared to come to our next meeting, on Monday at 3:30 p.m.

From there perhaps we can follow through. We will also have to be looking at the supplementary estimates for Treasury Board as well as Public Works and Government Services. That's part of our core function.

I would like us to continue on the sale of buildings as well, and on the payroll. I think we need updating on the payroll issue. We need to know how much progress has been made and whether there's still a serious problem.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Madam Chair, I just wanted to get clarification in terms of accrual accounting. When would you expect that matter would move out of the ad hoc committee and move back so that the full committee might be able to take a look at what was being proposed?

● (1545)

**The Chair:** I think I'll have a discussion with Daryl. I think there's a meeting Monday at noon. I'm going to talk to him. I'm thinking that we should bring it back to this committee. Perhaps they should come and make a presentation. We'll see what happens with what they have for us on Monday.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** It's Greek to a lot of people. It's not exactly the hottest topic on the Hill. For people like me, I love it, but not everybody thinks it's so great.

That being said, are there any other topics for discussion?

Then we'll adjourn the meeting. We'll see you next Monday at 3:30 p.m., when we receive Madame Barrados.





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