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—
Chair

Mr. Leon Benoit

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•(1235)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.)): We'll now deal with committee business. We're no longer in camera.

Mr. Alghabra.

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have a question for the analysts about the draft report for AECL and the isotope issue, the status of that report.

Mr. Jean-Luc Bourdages (Committee Researcher): We worked on the draft report as best we could while doing the forestry report. There's been a draft made. We first focused on the timelines of the events, starting with the work of the committee of the whole, plus the hearings we had. This has been translated into both languages and could be available to the committee. Parallel to that, we also started drafting a report on it.

We have two documents. We started with the timelines because there was so much information and some contradictions. We have a fairly detailed document that gives the chronology of events, the timelines and what was said by different witnesses. It's a sort of summary of the evidence. Plus, in parallel, we drafted the report. The second part of it, the report, has not been translated yet.

Mr. Omar Alghabra: I'm curious about what's in the second part of the report. If the first part is the chronology and the witnesses, would the second part be the recommendations?

Mr. Jean-Luc Bourdages: It's a report like the one you have here, but with more structure on different matters about the safety and health issues.

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Is it done, but needing translation? Is that the second part?

Mr. Jean-Luc Bourdages: There is still some work to do on it.

Mr. Omar Alghabra: How long do you think it will take?

Mr. Jean-Luc Bourdages: That could probably be sent to translation at the end of next week.

Mr. Omar Alghabra: It sounds like we have about two weeks to see the first draft.

Mr. Jean-Luc Bourdages: Unless you want to start with the timelines.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Is there any further comment?

Mr. Boshcoff.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): I think with all the hearings and stuff we've had on that, maybe next week,

Tuesday at noon, we could start with the timelines and start working on it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Mr. Allen.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to revisit the comments I made at the start of the meeting.

We're going to be tabling our report on Tuesday, which I'm very pleased about, but I went back to some of the notes we had on the study we started on the greening of electricity in Canada. Some comments were made by Mr. Avrim Lazar during that testimony, and I just want to refer to one of them. He says:

Our intention is to become energy self-sufficient. Our intention is to export green energy to the communities where we work. So instead of sending expensive energy through long grid lines from some coal or nuclear plant in southern Ontario or southern Quebec, our plan is to work to the point where our mills generate not only enough energy to run the mill, but also to run to the nearby town and thereby have a more sustainable, affordable, and environmentally responsible approach to energy generation.

Another comment was made by Bill Marshall, president and CEO of New Brunswick System Operator. He talked about alternative energies, including tidal and wave as well as solar and others. He talked about all the opportunities in New Brunswick, saying: We have a number of opportunities for smaller biomass projects. Combining all those in the region, there is a potential to reduce fossil fuel emissions by up to about 30 million tonnes of carbon dioxide.

I've looked at what we just finished, and we had a significant discussion on biomass as part of our report. We had a trip to Labrador, Churchill Falls, which was an interesting venture. I believe we've left some work undone. Recognizing our timelines, I think it's something we could finish up quickly.

I would propose the following:

Notwithstanding any motions previously adopted by the Committee, that the Standing Committee on Natural Resources finish its study on the greening of electricity in Canada with a focus on the future of renewable energy such as wind, solar, hydro, and other emerging renewable sources immediately following the study on the forest products industry.

I think, Mr. Chair, that would tie some of these things up in a nice little bundle. I'm not suggesting that we have a long report, not by any stretch of the imagination, but I think we could put together a nice crisp report with some recommendations in probably three or four meetings. There are probably some opportunities for us to actually have a visit to some renewable energy places, even in the area close to Ottawa.

I would like to propose that motion, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): We have that motion on the floor.

Mr. Boshcoff, and then Madame DeBellefeuille.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: To the motion, I don't disagree that this should be one of our priorities, but as a committee we did set our priorities. I thought it was a very collegial process last November when we all agreed what our top five were. I don't think anybody disagrees that this is a worthwhile study; I don't think we could do this in the next two weeks, considering what we have to wrap up.

I would hope this would be one of the things we would do in the fall, when we don't have a time deadline—not knowing if we're finishing on June 13, 20, or whatever. I don't see this as a meeting and a half, I see it as several weeks' worth of work, if it's going to be done right.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Madame DeBellefeuille, Mr. Alghabra, and then Ms. Bell.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree with Mr. Allen: it is important for us to become more knowledgeable about the range of renewable energy technologies, wind, and I would even add geothermal. I agree with him that we should finish what we have started. So I would keep that topic for when we come back. That said, we should finish our study on Chalk River. We have heard from witnesses, but we have not finished the job and we have not submitted a report. We have spent a lot of time on it, though. I would like to focus on what the research analysts have done and rely on their work for our study. The news that the MAPLE reactors are being discontinued concerns me. I have to ask what is going to happen about a new reactor for producing isotopes at Chalk River. I think that we have to wrap all that up. I propose that, first, we finish our work on the nuclear issue. Then we start a good study on renewable energy and biomass when we come back from the summer break, as Mr. Allen suggested.

I have a problem with two motions because they begin with the words “notwithstanding any motions”. I am lost. I do not know what that means or how many motions we are overriding if we vote in favour. I cannot remember everything, and I do not have at hand the document that tells me what I am overriding. We got it some time ago, but I do not have it with me. Before taking a position on a motion like that, I would like to know exactly what I am eliminating by voting in favour. I would like to know what we are committing ourselves to. Does the clerk have a list of motions that would be overridden if we agree to Mr. Allen's motion?

•(1240)

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Chad Mariage): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It was I who suggested this approach to Mr. Allen because, last year, the committee had already decided to conduct a review of AECL and the nuclear accord after the forestry study. There was also a motion to study Ms. Keen's case. The committee already accepted these two topics. The words “notwithstanding any motions” just

mean that it would take priority over the studies that the committee has already decided on.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: So there are three motions. No others, just these three.

The Clerk: It is just a matter of the topics and the order of the studies that you are going to do. That is the only change.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): There are others who wish to speak to this.

Mr. Alghabra, Ms. Bell, and Ms. Gallant, in that order.

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to echo what Mr. Boshcoff and Ms. DeBellefeuille have just said. I also support the intent and the purpose of Mr. Allen's motion, and I support its objective. But we've gone through quite a bit of compromise, negotiation, and navigation to get the forestry report done and to postpone the AECL report.

Since we have only a few more weeks left, I would urge the committee to complete the work that we've done, that the analysts have done in drafting the report, complete that, and perhaps do this when we come back in the fall.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Ms. Bell.

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Thank you for the clarification of what motions are out there. It's been a while since we talked about them, and I think we've forgotten.

I had another notice of motion from May 27, so that's one that we're not entertaining. It's from Mr. Alghabra on Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and the government's decision to discontinue the MAPLE reactors.

So that one is not before us in any way?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Well, it hasn't been introduced yet.

Ms. Catherine Bell: I wasn't sure which ones we were talking about.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): We're talking about Mr. Allen's.

Ms. Catherine Bell: Yes, but I was getting confused because the other motions had actually been introduced, and I did miss a meeting, so I wasn't sure if that one had actually been introduced or if it had just been handed out.

It was my understanding that we got into the Chalk River and Keen affair discussions because of some emergency things that happened back in January. The committee was called back, and we started a discussion that interrupted the forestry study. But before we started the forestry study, did we not commit to finishing the electricity study before the emergency Chalk River nuclear stuff got in the way?

It's a convoluted question, I know.

•(1245)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you.

I would like to speak in favour of Mr. Allen's motion. It's my understanding that AECL is still under review. While we've had the one decision on the MAPLE reactors come down, as a whole there is a review under way. To have the study done before the outcome of the review might make these work in contradiction to one another.

But what we do have today are the increasing energy costs in the petroleum industry. Just today there was an announcement in the news warning that the provinces who use gas as a means to produce electricity are going to have to let their customers know that there are going to be greatly increasing costs.

So with that in mind, I think it's incumbent upon this committee to focus on what is going to be an urgent situation, especially this coming winter, for our fixed income people, and to explore alternative means of energy. This is what is going to be the difference, literally, between buying groceries and not buying groceries for some families.

So I would again support Mr. Allen's motion.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Are there any further speakers on the motion? Otherwise, I'll call for a vote....

Mr. Ouellet, I apologize.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I remember what happened when we decided to study the forestry. We could not agree on the topic for our study. It was very difficult. Some wanted to study the forestry; others wanted to look at the isotope problem in the nuclear industry. We were really close to a majority agreeing to study the forestry on the condition that we finished our nuclear study. I feel that the people around this table agreed to study the forestry.

I do not see why we would go backwards now and forget the hour and a half that we spent reaching an agreement on the order in which we were going to proceed. No one around the table has changed. We decided to study the forestry, provided that we did not spend too much time on it, and to do the nuclear study immediately afterwards.

It turns out that the forestry study took longer than expected. But I think that everyone around the table is very happy with the high quality of the report. We can take pride in the fact that we did much better than with the tar sands, even if we took a little more time than we expected. But we should not forget that we decided to finish the nuclear study. We have heard from witnesses. We have enough time before the summer break to finish the study.

I find this proposal incomplete and imprecise. It is missing elements that we have already discussed and that must be included. I am against it in its present form. We can certainly begin that study, but we know that are going to leave it unfinished. We know that we will not be doing good work. We will forget it over the summer and move to something else in the fall.

We have the time to finish the nuclear study in the three weeks we have left. We are pleased and proud to have heard witnesses. We could add new elements because there have been new developments.

We can see that the nuclear issue is raising interest again; we see it in the newspapers all the time.

In my opinion, it would be quite logical to proceed in that way. I do not see why we would have the same debate for an hour and a half. The same people have already had the same debate using the same arguments.

• (1250)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): We'll vote on the motion before the end of the meeting.

We have Mr. Harris, and I think that's it.

Mr. Harris.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): I'd like you to call the question, please, on Mr. Allen's motion.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Are there any further speakers?

All right.

(Motion agreed to)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Allen mentioned the possibility of taking some trips to look at some of these projects in Ottawa. Are we interested in doing that, in trying to just begin the arrangements? At agriculture committee we started to do that, but we have to have the commitment of the opposition or we're not going to be able to go. At agriculture committee we planned one thing, opposition members didn't show up, and they just shut the bus down on us because we have to be paired to go.

So are opposition members interested in a couple of these projects?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): I don't recall the agriculture committee opposition members failing to show up for some—

Mr. David Anderson: This, actually, was before you were on it. In 2006 we set up a trip to Quebec and we needed to pair up so....

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): It's an historical reference. Okay.

Mr. David Anderson: Yes.

That's still in place.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Alan Tonks: I would like to do that, Mr. Chairman. I'll look forward to it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Mr. Allen, concerning your motion, which has passed, that we finish our study on the greening of electricity in Canada, etc., may I ask what your thought or your proposal is as to how we occupy our two-hour meeting Tuesday in furtherance of your motion?

Mr. Mike Allen: What I would suggest and like to see us do, Mr. Chair, is this. We've had a lot of witnesses on this greening of electricity already, and I think there's an opportunity for us to maybe start putting something together pretty quickly. We should be looking to finalize our plans for any trips we're going to be doing as part of this.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): With no disrespect to you, Mr. Allen, things would seem to be a little bit threadbare, then, as far as Tuesday's committee is concerned. Perhaps we'll just consider Tuesday as a committee business meeting and decide how to proceed on Tuesday. There's nothing concrete being suggested today.

Mr. Trost is next, and then Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): I'm not used to getting precedence over Mr. Anderson. Thank you.

Here is a possible suggestion. It has been some considerable time since we had the witnesses. Would it be possible to have some sort of review of testimony? It might be in some respects useful to have a quick review of testimony, if we're going to organize future testimony, because if we reviewed, even as a committee, old testimony—briefs or whatever, if this is possible—it might help us structure future witnesses. We could sort out what gaps we have to fill in rather quickly.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): I'll get to you, Mr. Anderson.

The clerk will address your question, Mr. Trost.

The Clerk: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

If members recall, we had a draft report on this issue, which the committee agreed to turn into a consultation paper and make public to stakeholders and to witnesses whom we heard. In that consultation paper essentially was a summary of the testimony. Members can go back, and I can circulate the latest version of that consultation paper to members. In that document is essentially a summary of the testimony. Members all went through the report, and so everything that's in there has been vetted by members. I think that would be a good starting point.

• (1255)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: I had a suggestion, but I think we've boxed ourselves in with timelines on Tuesday, because of the news conference. There's a research lab at Bells Corners that I know we could probably visit. Iogen is another alternative cellulosic biofuels project that's in town here, and I think some people have toured it before. That's another option.

But I don't know that we have enough time to do some of those things between twelve and two o'clock and be back in time for question period.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

For a trip to be organized, the committee has to first adopt a motion, and then a budget has to be prepared and it has to go to liaison committee. Then the whips have to agree to give us the permission to travel, even if it's just across the street. All that has to be done.

If it is the will of the committee to travel, my suggestion would be to come with a motion as soon as possible, specifying the place and the date. Then we can go through the process of having budgets approved and all that kind of thing. It's a very structured process.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Between now and Tuesday, then, we'll have an opportunity to review what had already been presented to us as a committee. We will receive from the clerk a draft press release. We'll receive from the clerk specifics as to where the press conference will take place. Our meeting, then, on Tuesday will begin at noon hour. One representative from each party will be at the news conference.

Go ahead, Madame DeBellefeuille.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Do not forget to get us a bite to eat in a meeting that goes from noon to 2:00 p.m. We need something to keep us going.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lloyd St. Amand): Well, somebody will prepare it. May it be me—or Mr. Benoit will prepare the meal.

We're adjourned until Tuesday.

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