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Chair

Mr. Mervin Tweed

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Thursday, March 6, 2008

•(1110)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Mervin Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, meeting number 15.

I'll call orders of the day. Last meeting we had a subcommittee meeting, and I believe everyone has a copy of the report. In order to approve the report and then continue with the rest of the business, I would need approval of the report.

Are there any questions on the report?

Seeing none, I'll ask all those in favour of the report to so signify.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The report is accepted.

This will allow us to move into new business.

I want to advise the committee and I guess apologize to some degree for not having witnesses here today. It has been a bit of a challenge to get everybody on the same page and here at the same time.

I am informed that next Tuesday the Environmental Assessment Agency will be here, and Infrastructure will be here. We are waiting to confirm Fisheries. Natural Resources have had, I think, timing problems more than anything. I am waiting to hear from them.

If there are any questions around that, whenever you feel you have a question, raise....

Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Is it just because of scheduling, and not a lack of interest to appear?

The Chair: I don't think it's a lack of interest. I think it was sprung on them fairly quickly. What I'm hearing more and more is that right after the break they would be more briefed and better prepared to present to the committee, but they are going—

Mr. Brian Masse: It's important that we get them, and that's the reason I was curious.

Thank you.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): I'm just going to make a comment about Infrastructure. I was personally

involved in that file. I know the reason they can't come either Tuesday or today is that they're out of the city negotiating another framework agreement with one of the provinces. It's a small, tight-knit group, and they just couldn't make it as a result of that.

The Chair: They will be here Tuesday, and we will have the environmental people here too, so I would advise everyone to be ready for that.

Also, the clerk sent out by e-mail a copy of the letters we are sending to the people it was agreed at the subcommittee meeting to invite, and you have a copy of these in front of you. I wanted you to have a look at them. I am anxious to get them out, so if you have any concerns or you think there's anything that should be corrected.... They're pretty straightforward. We've changed the last paragraph in them just to impact on the different groups we're inviting: one for FCM and the other for provincial and other jurisdictions.

Those are there just for your information.

At the subcommittee, a lot of names were presented as potential witnesses who might appear before the committee. We would be prepared to get them on the list and get them to start preparing for the appearance or at least prepare a written briefing that would be sent to the committee prior to their appearing before the committee at another time.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: Is the clerk asking us to submit specific names, or can we just tell them now? I can't remember who brought it up—I think Mr. Bell—but I thought the recreational boaters would be a really good thing.

The Chair: Because of the time, I would ask that we submit it in writing. That will give Maxime the chance to get the addresses and get the right people to contact.

Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: I want to make sure it's clear that we were going to hear from the government people first. Then we would still have time to get witnesses in as we hear that testimony and establish the relevancy of whoever we might have for later.

The Chair: Absolutely. I'm asking so as to try to get people ahead of time—

Mr. Brian Masse: To help out.

The Chair: I think because this is going to be a very challenging task, the more people we can prep in advance the better.

Mr. Bell.

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Chair, do I understand that the recreational boaters are being invited?

The Chair: If you know the name or the contact.... I would ask committee members to submit the organizations and the name of the contact if you know them. If not, give us the name and we will track them down.

Mr. Don Bell: Okay. I thought we had provided you with our list.

The Chair: We didn't actually keep track of it, as I thought it was more a discussion as to who might or might not appear. If you wouldn't mind—

Mr. Don Bell: Okay. We'll get you a copy of it later today.

The Chair: Yes, if you wouldn't mind, and we do have that two-week timeframe to do this.

Mr. Don Bell: In terms of the scheduling you're planning, as I recall—I don't have my little calendar with me—we were going to use next Tuesday for navigable waters as well, were we not?

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. Don Bell: So the intention now is to have the department in on Tuesday?

The Chair: Yes. The environmental people and the infrastructure people have confirmed; one more perhaps, but those two for sure.

Mr. Don Bell: Through you to Mr. Jean, do we have any more information on the rail report?

The Chair: I'll refer to Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Bell, that's exactly why I stuck up my hand. Good news: it will be tabled in the House on Friday.

Mr. Don Bell: We're looking at Thursday, then, for the rail report here?

The Chair: I've asked Maxime to contact Mr. Lewis to come and present on the rail.

Also, I haven't confirmed this, and I'll look for direction, but I wouldn't be surprised if we were going to need that first meeting when we come back. I know the review of our study is available, and we may want to take that first meeting back to give us a chance to—

•(1115)

Mr. Don Bell: April 1, you're talking about.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Don Bell: Just as a final comment, I hope we try to fill up the meetings we have. We have lots to do within the scope of this committee. A number of meetings have either been cancelled or been used as steering committee meetings—not really the purpose of the full meeting time we have—and we've been missing opportunities to deal with things.

I'm hoping we can get as much advance notice as we can, and if something looks like it's not going to happen on one of those days, then we have something else to slot in there.

The Chair: No one shares your frustration more than I do. I think that's why we're starting to see the positive responses to meeting attendance.

So next Tuesday we will have two groups—government agencies—and on Thursday we will have Mr. Lewis. I've scheduled the following for the first meeting back after the break, subject to a discussion at the end of Mr. Lewis' presentation; perhaps we can get that wrapped up and put to bed.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: Was it the decision of the committee to have a written submission by FCM, or was it...?

The Chair: We are asking for both, but based on things that I've heard since, I think they would probably want to come and make a presentation.

Mr. Brian Jean: I was thinking that, possibly, depending on what the committee as a whole thought, we could actually invite them for the same time as the other two departments that are coming, which obviously would be after we reviewed the rail study.

The Chair: Okay.

I'm just making sure I've got everything covered off here....

I regret that I don't have more to offer the committee today. If there's any other discussion, I'll open the floor. If not, I'll thank you for your kind attention and say that I'll see you on Tuesday.

Okay? Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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