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Chair

Mr. James Bezan

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•(0910)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): We'll call the meeting to order.

We have a stack of paper in front of us, to go through Bill C-16. We received 59 amendments in total. We're going to move through this in an orderly fashion, as we do with any clause-by-clause consideration. So we will start at the beginning of the bill. Of course, the title and short title we come back to—

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: On a point of order, Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan: First, Mr. Chair, I'm wondering if we could ask the House to accommodate us as we're doing the clause-by-clause. Could they give us a room where our assistants also could have access to a table so they can deal with these humongous documents? It's very difficult, with a document of this scale, for everybody to have enough space. So I'm simply requesting that the House accommodate us while we're going through this bill and give us a better room to work in.

My second request is that we deal with Bill C-311. My recommendation is that, consistent with the rules and what this committee has agreed to, immediately after we finish the clause-by-clause review of Bill C-16, we move to the review of Bill C-311.

The Chair: We're not talking today about future business. We're just going to talk about Bill C-16. We need to be relevant to Bill C-16. I do take your request for having a bigger room with tables for the staff in the back, as they do in some of the other committee rooms—

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'm suggesting we should decide if we're going to discuss Bill C-311.

The Chair: Mr. Scarpaleggia.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Chair, I don't want to debate what the agenda will be. However, following up on Ms. Duncan's point—and I say this with great regret, because we have the officials here, who have prepared very diligently for today's meeting—you will recall, Chair, on Tuesday at the steering committee we didn't achieve a consensus on anything really. In fact, when we ended the regular meeting at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, there were some things still up in the air—for example, whether the Shipping Federation would be invited to appear.

I was wondering if we could maybe go in camera for an hour to take stock of where we've been and where we're going, because I just

think we're proceeding without decisions on anything at this point. As I said, I don't want to debate what we should be doing or not doing, but maybe we need to sort of huddle or something, as a committee, for an hour. I apologize to the officials who obviously made the trip here today, but I think we need to hammer out a couple of things before we can move on.

The Chair: Mr. Bigras.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Chair, I too was surprised to see the orders of the day for this morning. In fact, while we did not make any decision concerning our future business, I was under the impression that the Shipping Federation of Canada, the industry representatives, were going to appear this morning. Unless we are told that they were going to talk about something other than Bill C-16, it seems to me that we were to have them with us this morning.

Indeed, we have not agreed on our future business, except that the Chair of the Committee was given a mandate and he undertook to consult with the Chair of the House to see if we were to go ahead with the study of Bill C-311.

I would think that before we proceed with the study of Bill C-16, the Chair should at least report to us on his consultations with the Chair of the House so that we know if we should proceed to Bill C-311 immediately after studying Bill C-16.

Without this information, the government would clearly have an advantage while another bill should also be studied immediately after Bill C-16. Thus I would like the Chair to give us his report on his consultations.

[English]

The Chair: I was left in a very difficult position on Tuesday. We didn't have any decisions. There were no motions. The meeting ended in a very heated manner. There wasn't a motion on the table. We didn't have a vote.

There was no decision. There was no consensus on any of the agenda, and I actually recall there were comments made that there was no deal and there was going to be no Shipping Federation for today. So when I left, I was under the impression we were going to continue on with the agenda we had in place, which we had previously agreed to, and that was that today and next week we would be dealing with Bill C-16.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I would just suggest that we have this discussion in camera, since we're sort of...

The Chair: Did you have anything on this point of order?

Just hang on a minute. We do have our agenda out there. We'd need to change the agenda today. I would require unanimous consent from all the members to change the agenda we circulated previously and agreed to, which said that today we're dealing with Bill C-16. I'm more than happy, after our two hours are up dealing with Bill C-16, to go in camera and have a discussion about future business. Right now we have our witnesses here. We made the agreement in the past that we'd be dealing with Bill C-16 today, and that's the way we should be going.

I need unanimous consent. Do we have unanimous consent to go in camera, as suggested by Mr. Scarpaleggia? This is a non-debatable motion.

Ms. Linda Duncan: On a point of order, sir, we don't need unanimous consent. There's a simple resolution to this. As a courtesy to our witnesses, we proceed, and we adjourn at 10:30 and go in camera to discuss the agenda.

The Chair: Well, I kind of suggested that. We'll do our meeting, then we'll go in camera to discuss the agenda. That's my suggestion.

Ms. Linda Duncan: We should do it at 10:30, because I have another meeting at 11 o'clock.

The Chair: Was yours a motion or a suggestion, Mr. Scarpaleggia?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's not a bad idea. It's just that I think half an hour, from 10:30 to 11, will not suffice for our discussion.

• (0915)

Ms. Linda Duncan: I have another meeting at 11 o'clock. We agreed that this would be resolved and would come back to the committee. There was an agreement that we'd have a report back from the chair, and I fully anticipated that we would have dealt with it first of all in the committee.

The Chair: We never had any consensus coming out of the meeting on Tuesday, and so....

On a point of order, Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Chair, we left off with your commitment to consult with the Chair of the House regarding how we are to proceed. To reiterate, what has been the result of your discussions with the Chair of the House pertaining to our diverging views? Did you consult him? What were his recommendations?

[*English*]

The Chair: I did consult with the Speaker of the House. I'll share that with you. It was under the interpretation of Standing Order 115 (2). It's one of these things that is a "should", not a "shall", for consideration of legislation. The desire of the House is definitely that we deal with legislation first. The Standing Order is actually referenced on page 841 of Marleau and Montpetit. Let me just grab that. The "shall" comes into effect as follows:

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The reference here is footnote 307 on Standing Order 115(2), which goes on to read that priority shall be given to legislative work.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I think that you misunderstood my question. This was not the issue we discussed in our steering committee. Our discussions centred more on whether consideration of bills should be given priority. Did you consult with the Chair on this specific matter? I am not talking about the process behind the allocation of committee rooms. I hope you did not just consult the Chair about whether we should meet in one room versus another.

[*English*]

The Chair: Let me just say, Monsieur Bigras, that we did have that discussion. Definitely it is the desire of the House that we deal with legislation prior to other reports. He says at the same time that the committee is its own entity and has the ability to determine its own schedule. It can do, and it has been done in the past, concurrent studies and bills at the same time.

On a point of order, Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Chair, if we are going to be dealing with the agenda, it's not appropriate for the officials to be in the room.

The Chair: Let's make a decision, then, that we go in camera at 10:30 to discuss—

Ms. Linda Duncan: If we need an hour, that would be 10 o'clock.

The Chair: What's the desire of committee? Do we have unanimous consent to go in camera now? Do I have unanimous consent?

Mr. Warawa, I'm asking a question.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Chair, could we have a five-minute break here to do some informal negotiations and get clarification, and then come back and deal with that question? Could we suspend for five minutes?

The Chair: Mr. Scarpaleggia first, and then Mr. Bigras.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I move that we go in camera immediately, until we are ready to resume with the officials.

The Chair: I have a motion on the table. Do you guys wish to go in camera, as Mr. Scarpaleggia has moved?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We have unanimous consent.

I'll ask that all people not associated with any of the members of Parliament at the table please leave the room.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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