



House of Commons  
CANADA

## **Subcommittee on Food Safety of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food**

---

SFSA • NUMBER 001 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

---

**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, March 25, 2009**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. Larry Miller**

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

## Subcommittee on Food Safety of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Wednesday, March 25, 2009

•(1535)

[*English*]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Andrew Chaplin):** Honourable members,

[*Translation*]

I see a quorum.

[*English*]

You should now proceed to the election of your chair.

I am ready to receive motions to that effect.

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** I move that Larry Miller be chair of the subcommittee.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Mr. Shipley that Mr. Miller be elected chair of the subcommittee.

Are there any other motions?

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** I have a question on procedure, Mr. Clerk.

**The Clerk:** I have to inform members that as clerk of the subcommittee I can receive only motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive motions of any other nature and cannot entertain points of order nor participate in debate.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I guess it doesn't matter. If you can't ask it, then you can't ask it.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Hon. Wayne Easter:** I wanted to know if you can be chair of two committees.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** I don't think so. Usually, we have another...

Okay, I'll try this. I'd like to nominate Bev Shipley as chair of the subcommittee.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Madam Bennett that Mr. Shipley be elected chair of the subcommittee.

Are there any other motions?

Mr. Shipley.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** I withdraw my name.

**The Clerk:** Am I to understand that only Mr. Miller's name stands?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Clerk:** Right.

The subcommittee has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the subcommittee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried and Mr. Miller duly elected chair of the subcommittee.

**The Chair (Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC)):** Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Thank you very much for your confidence.

In standing with normal procedures of the committee, our first order of business would be to elect two vice-chairs. I'd be open to nominations from the floor for vice-chairman.

Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** I nominate Mr. Bellavance.

**The Chair:** We have a motion by Mr. Anderson to nominate Mr. Bellavance.

Ms. Bennett.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I'd like to nominate Wayne Easter.

**The Chair:** It is moved by Ms. Bennett to nominate Mr. Easter.

Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I decline the nomination. I do not wish to be the first co-chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay.

I was just going to say that we should deal with first vice-chair, but since Mr. Bellavance has pulled his name, at this point, whatever comes out of this, if there are further nominations, the winner, if it came to an election, would be the first vice-chair and we'd go from there.

Are there any further nominations for first vice-chair?

I would entertain a motion that the nominations be closed.

Mr. Easter, I declare you first vice-chair.

I will now take nominations for second vice-chair.

Mr. Shipley.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** I think perhaps Mr. Bellavance wouldn't take first vice-chair, but he might take second vice-chair, and I would nominate him.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Yes.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay. It's moved by Mr. Shipley that Mr. Bellavance be nominated for second vice-chair.

Are there further nominations?

I declare the nominations closed.

Mr. Bellavance accepts. Congratulations.

We have a motion, which I presume everyone has in front of them.

Is that right, Mr. Clerk?

• (1540)

**The Clerk:** It has been distributed, sir.

**The Chair:** This notice of motion was placed by Mr. Anderson.

Would you like to read that into the record, Mr. Anderson?

**Mr. David Anderson:** I can do that. It states:

That the Subcommittee adopt the following schedule to guide its studies:  
The meetings of the Subcommittee on—

I think, Mr. Chair, that an amended motion was sent in that had March 31 as the first date. It continues:

—April 22, April 29, May 6, May 13, May 27, and June 3 be used to call witnesses to discuss issues relating to food safety; and

The meetings of the Subcommittee on June 10 and 17 be used to prepare a final report to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on these studies; and

That June 17 be the final meeting of this Subcommittee; and

That the final report of the Subcommittee to the Standing Committee include a request that this report be tabled with the House of Commons prior to June 24, 2009

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

Prior to asking for discussion on the motion, I just want to point out that the House is scheduled to sit until June 23. In order for this report to come out, it would have to be, first of all, passed by the subcommittee and then go to the main committee before we are able to have it presented in the House. As we can all see, this is a tight timeline, so I thought I should point out those dates.

Is there any discussion on the motion?

Mr. Allen.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have an amendment to the motion. I believe the clerk will provide copies for everyone, because it is a fairly substantive amendment.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** It's not April 1; it's March 31.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** I will correct it as I read it into the record, Mr. Chair, in regard to the date of April 1 being March 31.

The motion would now read:

The meetings should be held in room 269 West Block, 253D Centre Block, or 237 Centre Block in the hours following the closure of the House from approximately 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. This could be extended from 6 p.m. until 10 p.m. if the number of witnesses warranted the extension.

The meetings of the Subcommittee on March 31, April 22, April 29, May 6, May 13, May 27 and June 3 be used to call witnesses to discuss the issues relating to the Listeriosis Crisis of 2008. The fall meetings of the Subcommittee of October 7, October 21, October 28, November 4, November 18, November 25, and December 2 are used to call witnesses to discuss issues relating to food safety.

The meeting of the Subcommittee on June 10 be used to prepare an interim report with recommendations to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on these studies; and

That the interim report with recommendations of the Subcommittee to the Standing Committee include a request that this report be tabled with the House of Commons on or prior to June 18, 2009.

That the proposed meeting of the Subcommittee on December 9 be used to prepare a final report with recommendations to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on these studies.

**The Chair:** You've heard the amendment. The clerk and I were just in discussion here. If somebody wants to speak to it...

We're just wondering if the intent totally changes the motion, Mr. Allen. This may be a new motion. The clerk is just looking at that.

Is there discussion on the motion?

Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I'm okay for the moment.

**The Chair:** Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson:** I think we would make the argument that this is different enough from the original motion so as to constitute a new motion. There's very little that is similar other than some of the dates, so I would expect we'd be able to see that would be the case.

**The Chair:** We could. I'm just reading through this again.

Mr. Easter, did you have a comment?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I think we need clarification first, Mr. Chair, on whether it changes the intent or not, so that we know what motion we're dealing with.

**The Chair:** That's fair enough.

Would you give us just a second here?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Yes.

**The Chair:** The first part of the motion is certainly eligible. It comes in there and it lays out times.

There is an addition to the amendment that changes the original motion from a report to an interim report and then adds to it a final report to the House in the fall, by December 9.

Having discussed this with the clerk, I say the amendment is admissible. There are parts of it that are duplication, but I can understand why Mr. Allen doesn't change anything in there.

Part of the original motion said March 31 instead of April 1. Are you okay with changing that as a friendly amendment?

•(1545)

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Yes, for sure.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** We're open for discussion on the motion.

Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, I'm actually slightly disgusted or perturbed that we're starting off the committee on this foot. We had had some informal discussion with the opposition that we would be taking a look at the motion as we had presented it. I'm surprised to come here today to find what I would call major amendments.

I think the changes in this motion go beyond what the agriculture committee itself tasked this committee with doing. I think we're going to request that you take it back to the agriculture committee and see if this actually fits within the boundaries of what the agriculture committee itself has given us as our task here. I'm going to make that request. I don't know procedurally what we need to do to have that happen. Certainly this goes in a different direction, and in a much narrower direction, than what the agriculture committee obviously intended when it passed the motion. I have it here, and I'll read it out.

That, given the Listeriosis crisis that occurred last summer, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food establish a Subcommittee on Food Safety....

It clearly says here that this is to be targeted to food safety, taking the listeriosis crisis into consideration. I would make that argument. I would like to have you check with the clerk and determine whether this is actually within the bounds of what the standing committee assigned as a task to this committee.

I'm also concerned that the opposition didn't come to us and talk to us about this ahead of time. Actually, I think Mr. Allen asked Mr. Easter prior to the meeting starting whether he should let us know about the amendment, and Mr. Easter's answer was no. It's disappointing to me that if we're going to change this in such a major way, in a number of ways, that they would not have come to talk to us.

I think we also had some very informal discussions about when the meetings would be. We're under the impression that 6:30 to 8:30 would be a time slot that we could provide on Wednesday night. Now we're talking about 7 until 10, or 6 to 10 actually. Then we're also talking about extending meetings right through the fall, which again is another proposal that has been made without any consultation at all. We're talking about going from seven meetings to fifteen meetings without having had any discussion with us about this at all. We're not very happy with that. We're not going to be able to support this motion.

Clearly, as well, it's very strange that we talk about an interim report being made and then an interim report being tabled in the House of Commons. I'm not sure that I've ever seen that before. Typically the reports that are tabled are actually substantive and conclusive and include the full work of the committee. I think we're actually denigrating the work of the committee here to say that we're going to come with one report, and then we're going to come back months later and try to put that report into another report so that we finally have what they call a final report.

Mr. Chair, I think Mr. Allen should maybe reconsider here. Our original motion I think is pretty direct. It talks about the food safety, and certainly within that, from the witness list that we would be putting forward—and I'm sure the witness list that the opposition will be putting forward—we're going to take a good look at the listeriosis issue and the crisis that took place last summer. I think our motion actually has enough in it that this committee probably can do a good job of studying the issue.

I'd like to let some of the other folks here have an opportunity to discuss the motion, but I think I'll probably want to talk to it a little bit later here as well.

•(1550)

**The Chair:** Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** In my opinion, the subcommittee has the final say. Therefore, Mr. Anderson's suggestion to have the Agriculture Committee deal with tabling this amendment is not necessary, because the subcommittee has just elected a chair. The clerk may correct me if I am wrong, but my impression is that we are now autonomous and able to operate on our own. If we decide to discuss a motion and any amendments made to it, it is the subcommittee's decision.

The proposed amendment does not come as a surprise, for the simple reason that I myself had raised the problem created by a subcommittee in charge of discussing food safety. We cast our net very wide and we strayed far from the original intent, which was to discuss the listeriosis crisis. That was recorded in the blues. I had raised my doubts about that. Out of solidarity, we agreed to use the words "food safety", but that covers a lot of ground. If we simply plan an agenda that takes us until June 17 to discuss food safety, we have not resolved the issue. I even said that we run the risk of avoiding it entirely.

The amendment tabled by my colleague Malcolm will allow us to discuss the listeriosis crisis in very focused meetings. The Conservative Party has rightly emphasized the importance of talking about food safety in its entirety. I believe it was Mr. Lemieux who said that. Adding another aspect to the subcommittee's workload, dealing essentially with food safety, we resolve the problem that I raised. I am comfortable with this way of proceeding.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Allen, and then Mr. Shipley.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know from talking over the past number of months to my colleague Mr. Atamanenko—who actually proposed the first resolution at the agriculture committee about having a subcommittee—that he was quite clear in the spirit and intent of what he wanted to do, which was to develop a subcommittee to study listeriosis. And, quite rightly, the Conservatives said that's very important. I remember being at the committee and hearing them say that, which is absolutely fair in spirit and intent, because I think we all believe it's an extremely serious matter. They also wanted to talk about food safety in general, which is an important topic to study; there's no question it is.

But because of the nature of this particular outbreak of listeriosis last year, where 20 people lost their lives to the disease, to bulk it in and put it under one umbrella, to give it what I would consider to be short shrift and not look at it in a wholesome and fulsome way, would be to suggest to folks that we don't take it as seriously as we did.

The reason we moved it out of the agriculture committee, Mr. Chair, was because initially the schedule talked about two meetings at the agriculture committee. I know you're chair there, and you're doing an admirable job in allowing us to have a subcommittee. The reason for having the subcommittee was Mr. Atamanenko's request, and the amendment the Conservatives made was to study food safety as well. The spirit of that initial attempt by Mr. Atamanenko to have this committee formed, which has come to fruition through his attempts, was indeed relayed in this amendment to the specific resolution that's before us. That's why that amendment was made, to bring to fruition the spirit and intent of Mr. Atamanenko's motion that the agriculture committee send it here to a subcommittee, and that's exactly what I've done here, sir.

• (1555)

**The Chair:** Mr. Shipley.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was at those meetings when we actually had a long, long debate and discussion about this. So was Mr. Allen, if I remember correctly. He was sitting at the table.

This motion before us takes us away from the actual discussion we had around the table. We wanted to focus on listeriosis—which is a food safety issue. It was actually part of my discussion at the meeting, why we needed to look at the whole issue of how listeriosis and food safety fit in.

Mr. Allen, you talked about studying food safety as well. Actually, that wasn't the case; it was part of the discussion of listeriosis, which is a food safety issue. When the committee talked about this, it ended up with this unanimous resolution.

When we came forward with an amendment on a date, or whatever, for this motion—which has actually been out there and has been talked about—I couldn't believe it after the thorough and long discussion we'd had. I find it unfortunate. I wanted to come here to talk about listeriosis; I also want to talk about food safety, because you can't talk about one without the other.

I wanted to be on this committee to move ahead and get a thorough review done, not only of listeriosis but also of the food safety part of it—which might have been its cause—so that we could get together with a thorough report by June 18, or whatever that day is, so we can get this before Parliament prior to our summer break.

We have people who are interested in the agricultural component of it, we have people who are interested clearly in the health component of it, and we have people who will come forward as witnesses. I've seen a list of the potential names of organizations that would come forward, and I believe you can't just separate it without talking about the whole food safety issue.

I guess we could politicize this, but I don't think that's what Canadians want. I don't think the people in Canada who are going to

be listening to this and reading about it are going to be saying, how come you're only talking about one? If we have a food safety issue that includes listeriosis, then let's talk about that at this subcommittee. I think we've been charged with that responsibility, outside of the general Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I think it's actually restricting us before the Canadian people and their expectations of this committee's due diligence.

What if it were something else that happened in terms of food safety other than listeriosis? Would we just forget about it? I don't think so. I think Ms. Bennett is here because of her sincere concern about health issues, and so it should be for all of us. Agriculture and the production of food are paramount in terms of food safety. This is about a processing part that caused an issue in terms of food safety—at least that's what we think it may be.

I take this motion as restricting what we actually want to accomplish, and it certainly wasn't what the agriculture and agrifood committee unanimously agreed to when we passed the motion to establish this subcommittee. We thought about having the whole agriculture committee discuss this. But we determined that on this particular issue of food safety—which includes listeriosis—we should set up a subcommittee. We agreed with that, and we have agreed to move ahead.

I can't support this motion, which is going to take us away into next winter. It would almost imply that we've set up another committee that's going to continue now for however long, through the summer and into the next fall maybe, with this agenda. It will take us into next fall and likely up to Christmas.

• (1600)

We're going to have the press saying, “What are these guys doing? I thought this was an issue that required some immediate action?”

That, to me, folks, is not about immediate action. It's about an opportunity to politicize something that I don't think the Canadian people want to see.

I just don't understand why we can't deal with this issue thoroughly and completely in the timeline provided and get the report to Parliament before our summer break. That's what I would continue to support. I can't support this type of a motion, I'm sorry to say.

**The Chair:** Just before I move on with the speakers list, there's one thing I'd note about the discussion here. The original motion from the parent committee or head committee, or whatever you want to call it, was to study food safety.

This motion definitely goes away from that. I don't know whether or not we can do that. But it certainly is a question I didn't think of a few minutes ago.

Anyway, I'm going to go to our next speaker while we think about that.

Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was at the committee meeting where the original motion was passed, and it was my understanding that listeriosis and what happened last year would be a part of this study.

Let's put the motion in committee in the context of what we were talking about at the time. In fact, if memory serves, the initial words of the motion were, "Following the listeriosis crisis of last year, that the subcommittee be appointed to...", and then the various amendments came forward and we ended up with "food safety" as one of the terms.

It's well to put into context why the discussion and the motion was put forward. If you go back to my remarks—I think you'll find them in the minutes—we were of the understanding that the Prime Minister was going to call a fairly major inquiry. What he did instead was call an investigator who, as I said before, has no authority to subpoena witnesses, demand documents, or to investigate the minister's office or the PMO. In fact, this investigator reports to the very minister who's responsible for the CFIA, and he decides whether the report will be made public.

Now that we've seen our terms of reference, it's even worse. These terms of reference state that we're to "ensure that where there is reliable information that could affect individuals or organizations if the Independent Investigator was to make use of this information in her report..." It then goes on to say "that the concerned individuals or organizations will have an opportunity to review the portion of the report that may affect them and that their views will be sought before the report is finalized".

I'm sure everybody has the terms of reference.

So you have an investigator who's interviewing people. They can have legal counsel when they're interviewed, they can refuse to answer questions, and they can decide whether or not they like what's in the report. This is after a listeriosis crisis that cost 20 lives in this country. That's the context we debated this in, so listeriosis was a part of the food safety issue.

There are already 47 people on the potential witness list, so this is going to take some time. One of the problems with putting everything in a motion is that it locks us very tight. There may be some evenings that we can meet from 6:30 to 12; there may be some meetings that you have to work from 6:30 to 8:30. I think we should have that flexibility. As I understand the amendment put forward by Mr. Allen, it moves us towards handling the whole issue. We would use the initial stages to deal with the listeriosis issue. We would then prepare an interim report that would go to Parliament and to Ms. Weatherill. She is going to report a little later. It makes sense to get this out of the way. There will also be stuff related to food safety during those discussions, and then we can get into the broader food safety issues in the fall.

The other thing we should do—and I don't know when we can do it—is tour the plant that was involved, together with some of the smaller plants. To study the broader issue of food safety, we should also tour a port to see how CFIA inspects products coming in from China, or wherever it may be. In addition, maybe we should look at some HACCP operations on farms. We may have to do that on our own in the summertime and then complete the study in the fall.

●(1605)

So I'm certainly in favour of the amendment. It makes sense to me to go that way, so that we could deal effectively with listeriosis in the beginning, but a lot of the information we hear there will also relate to the broader issue of food safety.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Easter.

This is something we didn't have when we ruled at the start about the amendment. We based it on what was in front of us that Mr. Allen gave us, and the motion was presented by Mr. Anderson. I'm going to read to you a copy of the motion that came out of the committee, which was a directive. I think at the end of it you will agree that this amendment totally changes the intent. There's nothing wrong with it coming forth, but it would have to come forth as a motion and not an amendment.

That, given the Listeriosis crisis that occurred last summer, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food establish a Subcommittee on Food Safety; and that the members of the subcommittee be named after the usual consultations with the Whips; the composition of the Sub-Committee be proportionally the same as that of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food with the Chair being a member of the government, and that the subcommittee be granted all of the powers of the Committee pursuant to Standing Order 108(1) except the power to report directly to the House.

The key in this and the reason I have to rule out this amendment and that it has to be a separate motion is the fact that the agriculture and agrifood committee established a subcommittee on food safety. That was the motion passed. Therefore, I have to rule that. If I had had this at the start, I would have ruled that.

We're back to the original motion. It doesn't mean it can't be amended.

Ms. Bennett, you are next on the list.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I would suggest, Mr. Chair, that my intervention would probably have been better before your ruling, in that I don't hear anything in that motion that precludes us organizing our work in the way that is described in this motion. It means we actually do have to take the lessons from the listeriosis crisis and then look at the bigger issue of food safety as is described in this motion.

I see this motion as a work plan embedded in a motion, which makes perfect sense in that there is the urgency of the lessons learned from last year. There's also the need, as my colleague explained, to be able to call the witnesses Ms. Weatherill may not have access to, ask for the documents she may not have access to, and do a proper piece of work on the thing that precipitated the need in Canada to have an examination of food safety in its biggest context. I believe it makes perfect sense in terms of Mr. Allen's motion for us to do that piece of work first, the lessons learned piece, then hopefully the government will let us see Ms. Weatherill's report when it is released in June or July.

At the same time, the health committee is looking at four sessions, at least, on “Towards a Comprehensive Food Policy for Canada” in May or June. Then in the fall we can do the proper piece of work of the recommendations of this committee going forward as to what we need to do to actually reassure Canadians that they have, once again, the safest food system in the world. I think there is nothing in this motion that goes against what was the delegation from the parent committee to this group.

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Are you referring to Mr. Anderson's motion?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** No, I'm saying that Mr. Allen's motion—

**The Chair:** Okay. We can, in due time, come to that motion. We have a motion on the table, Ms. Bennett.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I'm actually challenging your ruling, if that's what I'm doing, saying there is nothing in the motion that you said was to do with food safety that doesn't allow this committee to divide up its work in a certain way, doing first things first, and then looking forward. The work that is described in this motion is the proper scientific way you would go about looking into something. You would look back at the lessons learned and then look forward into what we can do better. It makes perfect sense to me that this is totally in keeping with what the motion from the parent committee asked us.

**The Chair:** Ms. Bennett, your point is taken and noted, but the amendment—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** You've already made up your mind.

**The Chair:** The facts state it's the part about food safety; it's deliberately stroked out. It's what I have, and it's not a laughing matter. It's stroked out and replaced with listeriosis. I'm not debating whether one or the other is right, but the fact is that the motion, which I just read to you from the main committee, was a subcommittee on food safety, and this changes the intent.

As I said, if you want you can bring this motion, or Mr. Allen can bring it up, but it's not allowable as an amendment.

I even see Mr. Easter nodding his head.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I'm saying that listeriosis is a part of food safety. This is a work plan. We will do this part of the work first and then the other part of the work looking forward.

**The Chair:** I'm not here to debate you on that. I'm just pointing it out.

Mr. Easter, and then Mr. Anderson.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I was going to ask a question, Mr. Chair, but I think I answered the question myself when I looked at the amendment. Is your ruling based on an interim report to the committee—

**The Chair:** No.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** —or is it based on the words “food safety”?

**The Chair:** It's based on the part about food safety, which is the main.... You heard the reading. It's not on the other; it's on that point there, totally—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Okay. I have an amendment to the amendment. How about—

**The Chair:** No. You can't amend the amendment because the amendment is no longer an amendment. If you want to make an amendment to Mr. Anderson's motion, that is....

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Well, it should discuss the issues as to how the listeriosis crisis of 2008 affects the food safety in Canada. We can have that as the interim report. We can put food safety back in, if you want.

**The Chair:** Do you want to prepare an amendment?

In the meantime, Mr. Anderson, you have the floor.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, I want to point out something that we didn't have when I first spoke. It talks about subcommittees and their mandates.

I want to read some of this for members, because it's going to confirm, for those who don't know, that what you've done is absolutely correct. It states, “Sub-committees receive their mandates in the order of reference adopted by the main committee”. I'll probably come back to this later. Then it states, “Subcommittees possess only those powers which are conferred on them by the main committee”.

I think that backs up exactly what you've said here. The opposition has now decided that they want to completely change the direction and the schedule of what was agreed to at the agriculture committee.

You've made a wise decision here. To my mind, we came here to work together to do this study on food safety, which would have included listeriosis. I don't know why the opposition hasn't come to us and had some conversations with us about it. If they wanted something completely different from what we had agreed on, we would have been willing to sit down and talk to them. I don't know if their intent is to poison the well before we even start here, but it certainly seems like that.

The government has been interested in having these hearings. We have been serious. In spite of Mr. Easter's statements, Sheila Weatherill is doing an investigation. I think if you were to talk to her, she would say that there have been no roadblocks in any way, shape, or form put in the way of her investigation. Certainly, that's moving ahead.

It's interesting. While Mr. Easter is saying he needs to reject it and it needs to be thrown out, Ms. Bennett just said that we want to wait until after Ms. Weatherill's report comes before we do our report. One seems to be giving it a ton of credibility; the other is saying that it doesn't—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. David Anderson:** Do I still have the floor?

• (1615)

**The Chair:** Yes, you do.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Okay. I wasn't sure, because I didn't get it there before.



Anyhow, one says this report isn't worth considering, while the other thinks it's so important that we need to have it before we can possibly finish our work. I think if it's that important, perhaps they should consider waiting until after the report is in before we even begin our study, because certainly she'll have done quite a bit of work on this.

**The Chair:** Order, please, colleagues.

**Mr. David Anderson:** We're back to the original motion here. I think the original motion is fairly straightforward. I think what the opposition should do is go back to the agriculture committee. If they want to do something different from what has been proposed by the agriculture committee, I would think the responsible thing is for them to go back to the agriculture committee, take their change to the directions and the mandate for the subcommittee to the main agriculture committee, and have that discussion there. They should have their votes there and then bring that back to this committee. This committee has already spent an hour talking about this issue when it should have been moving ahead on the hearings.

I don't know if they're going to make the offer that they'll take it back to the main committee and come back next week with an amended motion that we're familiar with, but that would certainly go a long way toward beginning to make this committee work the way it should.

I'm sure I'll have some other things to say, but it looks like Mr. Easter is actually anxious to speak as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

Before we carry on, in regard to how this motion came about, I did speak to Mr. Bellavance and Mr. Atamanenko originally, because they were the two who brought the subcommittee idea forward. Then, of course, Mr. Allen is sitting in for the NDP, so he got involved in the discussion. It was simply to try to set out a direction and gain some kind of efficiency and timelines so that we could move along. That's what this is all about.

I'm not going to speak to any other part of the motion. That was how this came about. I perceived it as the idea being to get a report out by the end of Parliament. That's how these details came out from there.

I would also point out that even with this guideline here and this motion passed, if at some point any member of the opposition or any one else on the committee feels he or she knows more, this doesn't stop you from doing that. But I would urge the committee to try to deal something here today so that we could at least have a direction to go in.

Further on that, I have Mr. Shipley next and then Mr. Easter.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll just preface my comments a little bit by what my colleague talked about in terms of the subcommittee. Ms. Bennett, all those things that you talked about, we spent the better part of a full meeting talking about that at the ag committee. All of us were present at those meetings. If there's going to be a change, then it needs to go back to the full committee for that discussion, which I suspect again we will take up in our agenda. We've set a very strict agenda at our ag committee about how we need to keep moving.

Whether it's on potatoes, the industry of grains and oilseeds, the red meat industry, policies and procedures, we have a strict agenda to follow. What's going to happen is this will go back to the ag committee and we'll go through the same discussions that we've just had a few weeks ago.

Let me just preface again: "Sub-committees receive their mandate in the order of reference adopted by the main committee. By practice, certain sub-committees are struck in every session"—which means the session we're in—"and continue in operation until the end of the session". That session will come to an end in June. "Sub-committees possess only those powers which are conferred on them by the main committee."

The main committee spent almost a whole meeting talking about how we were going to set up the subcommittee. The full committee gave unanimous support that we move ahead and understood at that time, quite honestly, that there was a clear connection between what we're talking about in listeriosis and food safety. You cannot have one issue without having the other.

Right now, I'm not sure whether the opposition, between Mr. Easter and Ms. Bennett, actually wants to wait until after Ms. Weatherill has a report, because one is saying one thing and one is saying the other. That may come in July. Maybe we should not be duplicating what she's doing. On the other hand, we also had that discussion at the committee, and one of the things was why wouldn't we have her likely as a witness so that we can actually find out who she's been talking to, who she's going to be talking to, and what her mandate is in terms of her success in getting to the bottom of the issue around listeriosis? But the other part of it is, you can't have one without food safety, because that's what listeriosis is about.

So I'm not supporting taking this meeting and likely a meeting at the ag committee, where we actually have another full agenda to get through, to have the debate around a word of whether we're going to narrow the focus of this committee so that we actually can't deal with the issues around food safety, which include listeriosis.

Mr. Chairman, if we get to that stage and that amendment needs to happen, to actually move this back to the full committee for that discussion, if that's what the opposition wants, to delay this process... As my colleague said, we were ready to go to work. The opposition knew we were ready to go to work. Mr. Easter said we have a list of witnesses ready to go. The time is going to start ticking away, because now if it has to go back to the ag committee, we'll likely lose a meeting here. All of us have other committees to be at. I'm assuming we do; on this side we certainly do. I'm committed to spending the time at those also, but having three committees full time is going to be a challenge if we're not going to get moving on this one.

Mr. Chair, why couldn't we have had this discussion informally ahead so that at least we would have been prepared for it? I don't think that was my intention of how this committee should work.

● (1620)

For those who know me, I try to be open, and I try to let people know ahead of time so that there are no surprises. This committee will not do its job well, Mr. Chair, if we're going to start off by pulling surprises on each other.

When we get to the discussion on witnesses, we should each know who the witnesses are put forward by, when they will come in, and the timeline during which they'll have to do it.

We shouldn't be putting motions out that don't go through the proper process. We have a motion that actually changes the whole intent of what we are doing. If it didn't change it, we wouldn't be having this debate right now.

**The Chair:** Mr. Shipley, we are on Mr. Anderson's motion. That's what we're debating.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Actually, the point is that when you go to that motion, it takes me back to the powers of the subcommittee. And the powers of the subcommittee are conferred by the main committee.

I'll leave it at that for now.

Thank you.

•(1625)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm speaking against the original motion, because the original motion limits the work of the committee to, at the most, seven meetings. With the amendment, it has more meetings than that, which we can extend into the fall so that we can do the comprehensive job that needs to be done on the broader food safety issue.

If we can get our work done in total by spring, that's not a problem with me. But given the number of witnesses and the growing public interest in this issue, I just don't think we can do it in seven meetings, as proposed in Mr. Anderson's motion.

I would oppose the motion, and I'd call the question, seeing as you've ruled the amendment out of order. I'm sure a new motion will come forward.

**The Chair:** You can't call the question.

I have two speakers. We'll go to Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Mr. Chair, earlier, you briefly referred to a meeting I had with you about the timeline that essentially reflected Mr. Anderson's motion. That leads me to believe that members of the governing party are keen on controlling what comes next. However, I need to say one thing. For me, that meeting was informal, and we discussed the possibility of adopting a timeline of that kind. The only thing that I agreed to was the importance of acting quickly and tabling a report before Ms. Weatherhill tables hers in July. I do not know if you felt that I was agreeing to anything other than that. Please forgive my English, but you know very well that it is by no means my first language. To my mind, during that discussion, I did not say that I would be approving, or signing, anything. We were simply talking about possible dates.

I also had a meeting with Mr. Allen, as I mentioned earlier. Some of my questions were addressed, the ones I raised in committee when I said that I was afraid of avoiding the issue if we were to talk exclusively, or more widely, about the whole issue of food safety.

I simply want to dispel any impression that I had agreed to any timeline when you and I met. I reserve the right to take the time I need before reaching a definitive decision. That is what I wanted to say.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** No, and just to clarify that, Mr. Bellavance, I never insinuated that it was anything more than a casual meeting. I was just stating that the reason I approached you and Mr. Atamanenko was that you had brought it forth originally. I was just trying, looking down the road, to get something in place and to kind of get an idea. And you gave me kind of an idea that day. No, it wasn't binding, but we did have that. My intent was only to try to make the committee productive sooner.

I am a little disappointed. I know that we didn't talk about specific dates; it was just general dates. But we did talk about timelines. I think this motion represents that, for the most part.

Mr. Allen, you have the floor next.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just for clarification, you are talking about the original motion by Mr. Anderson. Is that what's on the floor at the moment?

**The Chair:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** All right, call the question.

**The Chair:** Is there further discussion?

I have Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that.

Mr. Shipley and others have said that the main agriculture committee spent at least one full meeting discussing the mandate of the food safety subcommittee. Now, I'm confused as to what was unclear for the opposition. They had an entire two-hour meeting to lay out their positions and their suggestions about what they wanted to have included as the content of the mandate of this subcommittee. When the two hours were over, it was agreed—I understand that the motion was unanimous at the committee—that it would be used to discuss issues relating to food safety.

If I can find it here, I can read the original motion. Mr. Shipley may have it. Here it is:

That, given the Listeriosis crisis that occurred last summer, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food establish a Subcommittee on Food Safety;

Now, the opposition was sitting there for two hours, Mr. Chair, to discuss this, and this is what they agreed to. So at the end of two hours they said yes, we want to establish a subcommittee on food safety, given the listeriosis crisis. The government was in full agreement with that.

It goes on:

and that the members of the subcommittee be named after the usual consultations with the Whips;

—which has been done, and that:

the composition of the Sub-Committee be proportionally the same as that of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food...

I'm not sure that's actually happened, but I understand agreement was reached about the composition of the committee.

...and that the subcommittee be granted all of the powers of the Committee pursuant to Standing Order 108(1) except the power to report directly to the House.

Mr. Chair, it's just strange to me that the opposition seems to have been confused about what it is they agreed to and what it is they had discussed for those two hours. It's clear that the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food has given direction to this subcommittee to discuss food safety. That is actually why we put this motion forward, because it says exactly the same thing, to call witnesses to discuss issues relating to food safety.

Certainly, Mr. Chair, those issues of food safety are going to deal with listeriosis. That's obvious because that's part of the mandate that was given by the original committee.

The opposition knew full well what they had agreed to. The motion was unanimous, as I mentioned, and I'm just not sure if the opposition then realized they didn't get what they wanted or if they just felt they needed to create some mischief at this committee in order to start the committee off on an antagonistic footing where there is conflict. We've lost a lot of ground today just because of this motion and the fact that these folks didn't bring this thing forward for any discussion ahead of time before attempting, as you pointed out, to completely change the direction of the subcommittee.

It seems they were supporting one thing and now they're trying to talk people into supporting something completely different. They bring another issue forward after having agreed to one of these things. I wonder how often that's going to happen as this committee goes forward. They had the opportunity, Mr. Chair, to reformulate, if you want to call it that, the motion from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. Obviously, they chose not to do that. This is what they wanted. They outnumber us on the committee. They got the motion they wanted. It's been brought here. Then once it got here, through some tricks or whatever, they thought they were going to completely change the focus on this.

I assume what happened at the committee is that they did enough to get the government on side and to say we wanted to go ahead with this and deal seriously with this subject—which we do—and then they've come here and they think they're not going to get enough politically out of this, so they're going to try to play some tricks on the opposition and on the Canadian public and try to redirect the direction of this subcommittee.

That's not how subcommittees work, as Mr. Shipley pointed out earlier. Mr. Chair, it says that "Sub-committees are to committees what committees are to the House; the parent body is relieved of a portion of its workload by delegating some part of its mandate or a particular task to a smaller group".

There is a very particular task that has been given to this group, and that is to take a look at food safety in the context of listeriosis and the outbreak last summer.

We would like to get to that as soon as possible. It's unfortunate that the opposition seems to be interested in playing games rather than in getting ahead.

• (1630)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** We would too, Mr. Chair, but I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** What's your point of order?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** My point of order is on Mr. Anderson's filibustering. We want to get to the issue, have the hearings, and bring in witnesses.

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order. He is speaking to the motion.

• (1635)

**Mr. David Anderson:** I think that's an example, Mr. Chair, of the fact that the opposition is not very interested in working constructively with us. They'd sooner interrupt on points of order to try to disrupt what's going on here before the rest of us are able to make our points.

I'm probably more surprised by the NDP and the fact that they were the ones who were involved in the original motion and in putting it together. It sounds as if Mr. Atamanenko had a major influence on the motion that was brought forward to the standing committee and he got what he wanted. When he presented his motion, the committee went along with him. I'm sure it may have been a surprise to him and he realized that he could have asked for more. He's going to try to push the limits here and see how much further he can go before the government refuses to cooperate.

Our concern is that we actually get to this study and start to understand what happened last summer. We need to take a look at the food safety system in this country in terms of the things that are good about it and some of the things that we can improve.

I again come back: that is what the motion is about. That's where our motion is. It addresses the meetings that would relate to it. I actually think the interesting thing is that if they pass our motion as it is, I'm sure additional meetings could be added, if Mr. Easter insists that we need to hear extra witnesses before June 17 or before June 10. If we could schedule them and fit them in, I'm sure all of us here would be interested in hearing from as broad a group of witnesses as possible.

I have a few other things I want to talk about. I would mention that our interest is really in doing a good job on this report. It's unfortunate that the opposition has taken this approach today to really try to change things in a negative direction.

I want to actually go back to this issue of the subcommittees and talk a little more about them. I think it is important to reiterate that the subcommittees receive their mandates in the order of reference adopted by the main committees.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** You have a point of order, Mr. Allen.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I believe you can help me with this, of course, since I am a new member of Parliament. But my understanding is that the member is simply going back over the same material again, which the honourable member said he would do. He said he was going to do this and tell us again. He's simply repeating himself and not making a fresh point.

I truly believe that what we're seeing here, Mr. Chair, is an attempt to filibuster this committee, when the serious issue of the 20 Canadians who died of listeriosis is on the table.

**The Chair:** I don't believe that's a point of order.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** If the honourable member is truly serious about this committee going forward, let him put his motion to a vote and let us move on. Otherwise, I believe you should rule on the fact that he's about to repeat himself and has repeated himself on numerous occasions during this last period of time.

**The Chair:** I don't believe that's a point of order, Mr. Allen. He's speaking to the motion. As to how he does that, it's his prerogative.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, I think Mr. Allen is the one who should be apologizing for playing games here. It is ridiculous for him to expect we're going to take his interest in this seriously when he pulled a stunt like this today and came here trying to redirect the interests and the direction of the subcommittee. That is something he should be apologizing for, rather than attacking the government.

If he wants new points we can do that, Mr. Chair. I was going to go through Marleau and Montpetit about subcommittees because it is important that the opposition understand the role of subcommittees. I'm sure he'll be appreciative of the many new points he is going to hear. A couple of them we've read before, but he'll be happy with that.

Sub-committees are to committees what committees are to the House.

As I said, "Sub-committees are to committees", Mr. Chair, "what committees are to the House", and the parent body has the opportunity to relieve itself of some of the work it's going to do. In this case, that's what the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food has decided to do. It didn't want, or didn't feel that it had the time, to take up the whole issue of food safety, so it has passed that off, as it has the right to do, to this food safety subcommittee. It has designated part of its workload to us, and we certainly want to get to that and to get that done as soon as possible.

It is interesting that subcommittees can only be established if they have been empowered to do so, and the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food has obviously been given that authority because it has been able to appoint this subcommittee to deal with the issue of food safety.

Mr. Chair, the House has on occasion established subcommittees directly or ordered that particular studies be carried out by a subcommittee, and that's exactly what's going on here. It has happened before. This is what the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food chose to do. They made the assignment that they wanted us to take to cover these issues, and that it be granted all the powers of committee as well, except the

power to report back directly to the House, so I assume we will report to the committee and then back to the House.

Mr. Chair, the next sentence in Marleau and Montpetit is ironic, given what we're dealing with here today. It says that proceedings in subcommittees are to be of an informal and collegial nature. It is unfortunate that Mr. Allen was giving me a lecture about reading out of Marleau and Montpetit a little bit earlier, but had he read this before he came to the meeting today, perhaps we wouldn't find ourselves in the situation we find ourselves in now whereby you've had to reject the motion they brought forward. Certainly we would like to try to keep these procedures informal. We'd like to keep them collegial. A good suggestion was made by Mr. Shipley that if the opposition wants to change the direction of this subcommittee, they should go back to the committee. If the opposition were to make that suggestion today, we would be more than willing to take that up and say they should go back to the committee and get the directive from the committee that they want for this subcommittee. Certainly the government and the opposition members can then discuss that. We can come back here and, I hope, start over in that informal and collegial way that we, certainly Mr. Shipley and I, would like to pursue.

I think the frustration here now is that even as we go ahead we're probably going to be suspicious of what the opposition is trying to pull, because as you can see, we are outnumbered enough here that we really do need to work with them—

• (1640)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** The member continually talks about the opposition trying to pull tricks. There is no such thing. The member quoted the rule book that subcommittees should be informal and of a collegial nature. I agree with that. However, ever since the Jay Hill rule book on dirty tricks came out, the opposition feels it can't trust the government, and that's why we had to lay out a substantive motion so that we do all the things that have to be done.

**The Chair:** Your point is not a point of order, Mr. Easter.

Mr. Anderson, you have the floor.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, that was a very good intervention by Mr. Easter because that is exactly the point I'm making. He is justifying his trick. He basically said that. They came here with a trick today and they were trying to make sure we didn't know about it, and he feels he has to do that, but that's his opinion. Mr. Shipley and I have come here to try to work collaboratively on this issue to try to get this committee up and going and to start getting these hearings done as quickly as possible.

This is the trick then, as Mr. Easter has just admitted, that the opposition is trying to play on the government. That reinforces the idea that they should go back—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** But that's a fact. You can't be trusted to—

**Mr. David Anderson:** They should go back to the committee if they don't want to play tricks.

**The Chair:** Order.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Shall I continue? Thank you.

I think the point is well made by Mr. Easter that they've got a trick up their sleeve, and what they should do is go back to the agriculture committee and try to play the trick there and see how that works. It would probably be far better if they brought the thing forward with 48 hours' notice to the agriculture committee. I guess they couldn't do it this week; they've probably missed their chance already. But they could take it back to the agriculture committee and have the agriculture committee debate it. Obviously it's probably going to take less time than the last motion. I think we could be back at this next week if we could get this settled and get on with the hearings.

But rather than that, as Mr. Easter said, they had to do something that was tricky, and now we find ourselves locked up where we think we have a good motion here that would cover the issue over the next three months and the opposition is not willing to do that.

I just want to go back, actually, to Marleau and Montpetit—unless there's more that the opposition has to say about that. Although the motion from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food does say that the composition of the subcommittee be proportionally the same as that of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, actually this committee is not set up that way. That's in line with Marleau and Montpetit, because it does say that the membership of a subcommittee is often not proportional to the party representation on the main committee, but then the motion from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food says that in this situation the chair needs to be a member of the government. Marleau and Montpetit actually says that doesn't necessarily need to happen. It says that members other than government members have been selected to chair subcommittees—

• (1645)

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Point of order.

[English]

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Bellavance.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I do not know where Mr. Anderson is going with that. He probably wants to waste time. To my knowledge, the party whips are responsible for meeting and discussing the ways of creating a subcommittee before it is struck. As such, he should perhaps have this little chat with his own whip. In fact, the whips, including the government whip, decided that this subcommittee would have seven members, two from the Liberal Party, one from the Bloc Québécois, one from the NDP, and three from the Conservative Party, including the chair. So I do not see where Mr. Anderson is heading with his comments. I feel that he is out of order.

[English]

**Mr. David Anderson:** Am I ready to go again?

**The Chair:** You're ready to go again.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** You had a point and I'm not disagreeing with that. You're right, the whips did meet.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Actually, Mr. Chair, I wasn't arguing with that. The whips did meet and they did set up the committee, and if Mr. Bellavance thought I was criticizing the makeup of the committee, I certainly wasn't. I was just pointing out that in Marleau and Montpetit, it does say that the membership is often not proportional to the party representation, and in this situation that's actually true. So this committee, in that sense, has been constituted legally, and it's great that Mr. Shipley and I can be here. We're both excited to be here and to be working on this subject.

I hope Mr. Bellavance didn't misunderstand, because I certainly wouldn't want to be criticizing their whip or ours. I certainly wouldn't be doing that, because they spend a lot of time trying to put things together so that they will work. Actually I'm sure if they were to read this...his whip is probably as unhappy as we are today, because I assume the whip thought the committee was going to get off to a quick start here, and because of these tricks that the opposition has pulled off here, as Mr. Easter has pointed out, it seems like we're certainly going to get delayed a bit. Anyhow, that was a good intervention, but I wanted to make clear that I certainly was not criticizing either the makeup of the committee or the whips of the parties who put it together.

But I am glad, Mr. Chair, that you are the chair of the subcommittee, and again that's in line with Marleau and Montpetit, because certainly that's what the directions from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.... It's a good thing they didn't try to pull another trick on us, Mr. Chair, in terms of who we're electing to the chair, but I guess they didn't dare go that much against the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food's directions to this subcommittee.

I should point out, Mr. Chair, that standing committees are empowered to establish subcommittees. It was mentioned a bit earlier in Marleau and Montpetit, but in forming those subcommittees, standing committees cannot only draw on the members of the main committee but also on associate members. I think that's the exciting thing, because Mr. Shipley and I are both able to be here.

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Bellavance.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Mr. Chair, perhaps I did not express myself properly earlier, but I maintain that the member's remarks seem out of order to me. We have to discuss his motion. Yet he is raving on about things that have nothing to do with this discussion, which, let us recall, should be on the motion. It is a pleasure to listen to Mr. Anderson; I really like his voice, but he should focus on his motion. We only have until 5:30 p.m.

[English]

**The Chair:** You are right that Mr. Anderson has to address the motion, and my experience on committee is that many members speak to the point in many different ways.

Mr. Anderson, you have the floor.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, this is directly speaking to the motion because it's talking about the makeup of the subcommittee, and that's an important part of what's going on here. Absolutely, a schedule is part of that as well, and so is the makeup of the committee. So it's good to be here to be able to talk about the makeup of the committee. I was just getting to the point—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** No, no, your motion is only on the schedule—

**Mr. David Anderson:** —that the exciting part for me was that I get to be here, Mr. Chair—

**The Chair:** Do you have a point of order, Ms. Bennett? What's your point of order?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Yes. He is not speaking to the motion that he has proposed. It's only about the schedule and the unbelievable fact that he thinks the work will be done by June 17. I understand that the parent committee had suggested four meetings and therefore it was proposed that there needed to be a subcommittee because that would not be enough. His motion speaks to only seven meetings, and they think the meeting will be over by June 17. So if the member wants to speak, then he should speak to the schedule.

But we won't be able to—

• (1650)

**The Chair:** Ms. Bennett, you don't have a point of order, and something that I probably should have said to Mr. Bellavance is that I'm sure Mr. Anderson is going to get to the point. He just indicated that he was, so let's hear him.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** If it's about the schedule, Mr. Chair, not the makeup of the committee.

**Mr. David Anderson:** It's certainly unfortunate that Ms. Bennett isn't the chair of the committee, Mr. Chair, because she certainly seems to have strong opinions about how it should be run.

Nevertheless, I think it's important that we do talk about the subcommittee and about the schedule. But what I'm excited about is actually being able to be here, and to be on the subcommittee and talking about the schedule, because it's been a while since I've been able to be on an agriculture committee with Mr. Easter and Mr. Bellavance. Actually, this brings back a lot of memories of things we've worked on together, and I should maybe talk about some of those just out of a sense of nostalgia.

Mr. Chair, I'd like you to check and see if I'm allowed to make an amendment to my own motion. Perhaps you could check with the clerk and see if that's possible.

**The Chair:** I don't think I have to check with the clerk. I believe it's admissible.

No, it isn't. I stand to be corrected.

**Mr. David Anderson:** I'm just wondering, Mr. Chair, whether it would probably be a good thing, in terms of this schedule as well, that it be taken back to the main committee to be discussed. We've mentioned that the opposition should take their motion back to the committee, but it might be advisable to take this motion that we've made back to the main committee and then to have the committee confirm whether that's what they would like to see or not. If I could make that motion, I would certainly do that, I think.

Is Mr. Shipley on the speaking list as well, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, he is. I do have Ms. Bennett before him.

But it's already been clarified that you can't make an amendment. Are you trying to make a separate amendment?

**Mr. David Anderson:** No, I'm not going to make an amendment. You've told me I couldn't do that.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Anyhow, Mr. Chair, in my discussions about the motion here, I did want to point out, through Marleau and Montpetit, some of the responsibilities of the committee with respect to the motion and with respect to the general activity of the committee, as well as to deal specifically with this motion.

It's interesting that the main committees can establish subcommittees, but only if they are empowered to do so by the orders of reference that establish them. Certainly the primary committee, the House of Commons agriculture committee, has done that, so we're able to have those established.

There's some discussion, of course, in Marleau and Montpetit about the liaison committees and what roles they play as well. Certainly they have a limited mandate, but often are empowered to create subcommittees that then could bring forward issues such as those we're dealing with today. I think they as well actually have the ability to draw their membership both from the main committee and from a list of associate members.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to continue and talk about the fact that committees often have to establish subcommittees in order to deal with agenda and procedure. I think a number of people here have been on the subcommittee on procedure for the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. Certainly, I think that subcommittee must have worked better than this one does, or we certainly wouldn't have gotten even this far on this issue.

There's often a steering committee in charge of setting the agenda. It might have been good, actually, if this subcommittee had had a steering committee of some sort before today so that some of this stuff could have been resolved. I feel a bit bad about the fact that you met with a couple of the opposition members who thought they were generally in agreement with what was being proposed here today, but then we got to the meeting today and found out that this motion that we brought forward does not seem to meet the requirements they want for the schedule over the next few months.

The mandates of the subcommittees, of course, are received by the main committee. We've talked about that a fair amount today. All of us have talked about that. I assume Mr. Shipley wants to talk about it again a little bit later, but again, I would just mention that it was clear from the direction from the main committee that this is to deal with food safety. That is what our schedule reads: that the witnesses are to discuss issues relating to food safety. Certainly, the subcommittee has been set up to do that. That's what this motion deals with as it comes forward.

Obviously, by practice, subcommittees are struck in every session and they will continue in operation until the end of the session unless they come to the end of their mandate. Again, that brings us back to this motion today, because when would the end of this subcommittee be? What we have suggested is pretty clearly a fairly tight timeline, but one that I've already acknowledged, and between now and June we'd be willing to put other meetings in here if the opposition needed them. Mr. Allen, in his motion that was ruled out of order, had talked about us having four-hour meetings, so I would assume that seven four-hour meetings are similar to 14 two-hour meetings.

•(1655)

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Allen.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My honourable colleague has just made the statement that you ruled my motion out of order. I believe what you said was that the amendment I put forward was out of order, and indeed, if I wished to move it as a motion, it would be in order. I believe my honourable colleague is incorrect when he states that you have ruled it out of order. The amendment, for sure, you have said is out of order, but not the motion if I so intend to introduce that as a motion. Is that not correct?

**The Chair:** I ruled your amendment out of order because of the part I discussed earlier on food safety, so if you're asking me if I did rule the amendment out of order, yes, I did.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** No, what I'm asking is.... The honourable member said that you ruled my motion out of order. What I'm saying is—

**The Chair:** I ruled your amendment out of order.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** That's correct, and indeed that can stand alone as a motion and would be deemed to be ruled in order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Allen, any member of this committee can bring forth a motion at any time.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** I appreciate the clarity, Mr. Chair. And for clarity's sake, what I'm saying is that the honourable member across the way, from the government side, has said that you have ruled it out of order. I'd like you to actually for the record state that this is incorrect. It was his statement that my motion was out of order, ruled by you.

**The Chair:** You didn't have a motion, you had an amendment, and I ruled the amendment out of order.

You have the floor, Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson:** I can correct that, Mr. Chairman.

I admit that I was confused, but maybe it was because at the top of Mr. Allen's amendment, he wrote the word "motion". I feel terrible that I would have said that you ruled his motion out of order when you didn't rule it either in order or out of order. He did present it as an amendment, that's right; I guess I was confused by the fact that at the top of his page, which he brought here today, he called it a motion. In my enthusiasm, I misspoke. I called it a motion, when certainly it was an amendment that was ruled out of order.

It's unfortunate that he's broken my train of thought. I may have to cover some of the same ground in order to get it back.

I think I was talking about the fact that we have a lot of meetings scheduled. In the amendment that was ruled out of order, Mr. Allen had suggested that we could have meetings from 6 o'clock until 10 o'clock. To my mind, if we had our seven meetings and they were running four hours, that's equivalent to 14 meetings. That's a lot of meetings on one subject. I don't know if we've spent that much time on hardly any subjects. But it would certainly give us the opportunity to give a full airing to this issue. Then we would be able to prepare, by June 10 to June 17, a final report to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Actually, I think perhaps that might be the compromise that would enable us to move ahead here. If the opposition were to come over and discuss with Mr. Shipley the fact that they'd be willing to settle for those seven meetings and run them longer, I think we would probably find that very acceptable. We could likely move on here.

The way they have it set up now, it's basically open-ended. They've changed the direction. Their suggestions change—

**The Chair:** Mr. Anderson, we're talking about your motion.

**Mr. David Anderson:** I'm talking about my schedule, but I think I need to compare it to the options that have been presented, Mr. Chair. It's not a pretty thing. I know that. But I think we need to make some positive suggestions here.

I did have to look at what they presented. Were they to come and suggest that we do the seven meetings we've suggested and that those meetings be longer than a typical meeting—Mr. Shipley is as enthused as I am about this committee, and he wants to get moving as well—we would certainly be able to start next week, on March 31, and get moving along.

Hopefully, at some point, the opposition members will come to their senses. We want to get this report done. That's the important thing. This situation happened last summer. Obviously it was an important series of events across this country. It's important that we take a look at what happened, at what went well, and at what can be improved. Certainly we want to do that. But I don't see any reason, as I think Mr. Shipley pointed out earlier, to take until December 9, 2009, to do a report on something that happened in the summer of 2008. That just doesn't make any sense, unless, again, somebody is trying to play tricks. And as Mr. Easter has already admitted, the opposition started off that way. We're willing to try to trust them, because we want to move this thing ahead and do a good job on it. But certainly they're not off to a good start in terms of trying to get us on side with them.

Again, it seems to make sense to me, Mr. Chair, that we could start on March 31. We could start next week. We could move from there and then meet April 22, April 29, May 6, May 13, May 27, and June 3. If those meetings were all extended, we'd certainly be able to get in the same number of hours that were being proposed by the opposition. We could come back, get that report done, and certainly have it done by the end of the session.

There's nothing precluding the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, in the fall, after Ms. Weatherill's report comes in and after this report comes in, if they want to take a look at it, from coming back to it. I'm not sure that it's this subcommittee's responsibility to spend nine months looking at a report that should be done as soon as possible, and possibly could be done by June or by the time we get out of here in the summertime. I notice that even some of the opposition members seem to be shaking their heads and thinking that this is probably a reasonable expectation.

Again, the opposition controls the numbers at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, and if they want to do something more on this in the fall, they would certainly be able to do it. But the way this has been presented today looks as if it's more about politics and trying to lever this issue for some political gain than about the opposition being interested in really finding out the facts related to what happened over the last few years.

It would be good to have that report on June 17.

Another thing that would be really good would be to actually have a unanimous report. I've been able, on a number of committees, to be part of a discussion that's resulted in a unanimous report. I think that if we could get through this in a positive atmosphere, we might be able to come to the end of the road as soon as possible, preferably in June, so that the government could take forward the recommendations from this subcommittee—I guess the recommendations will come from the standing committee—and improve the food safety system in this country by utilizing them and putting them in place.

No, I'm not done yet. I'm just getting a little drink of water here, Mr. Easter. We want to continue, of course.

Again, I'm comparing our schedule to the one that may be proposed here in the future, and I'm thinking that there's certainly nothing we wouldn't be willing to discuss about the whole issue of listeriosis. There are other food safety issues, obviously, as well. But it's in our interest to try to keep the focus on the events of last summer, because the purpose of this is really to learn from what happened and to try to put in place better protection for Canadians.

I'm glad that we have made the recommendation that we're just going to do a final report, because, again, the suggestion that we might have an interim report in June and come back to a final report in December just doesn't make any sense at all to me.

• (1700)

Again, I'd make the point that we want this thing to get done. Why don't we just pick June as the finishing date and get this report done? As I mentioned, the agriculture committee can then make a decision about whether they want to do a broader study or a narrower study. There's certainly nothing stopping them from doing that.

I don't think I've actually ever seen that an interim report has been presented, and then six months later somebody has come back with a report that substantially changes it. I understand, as Ms. Bennett said, that one of the reasons for doing that is that they want to make sure they include Sheila Weatherill's report in this report. That may be a good thing, because clearly Ms. Weatherill has a ton of experience in this field, she's been given free rein to do a thorough investigation, and certainly I think that the outcome of that report is probably going to be a good one.

We would like to see this thing done as quickly as possible. I don't know if the opposition is willing to extend meetings through April, May, and June in order to get the equivalent of these 14 meetings in, but that might be a way of resolving the issue that we have here today, and we might be able to get moving ahead on this thing.

Actually, I want to come back a bit to talking about the subcommittee, in light of this schedule as well, because certainly the orders of reference we've received from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food limit what this subcommittee can do. And I think, Mr. Chair, you've already made that clear.

I would actually be concerned, Mr. Chair, if the suggestion that was turned down today—the amendment that was ruled out of order today—came back as a motion and was found to be in order. It seems to me that, again, the agriculture committee has given us one mandate. I don't see anywhere in Marleau and Montpetit or in the documents and the breakdown that subcommittees have the ability to wander off on an independent path. It's not there. It says that the subcommittees receive their mandate through the order of reference that has been given by the main committee. The motion was adopted by the main committee. That limits the subcommittee to being strictly within the boundaries of the order of reference that has come from the main committee.

• (1705)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Just to correct the record, the motion that will eventually be proposed by Mr. Allen does not go away from the mandate. In fact, it strengthens it specifically with the witnesses we would be meeting with and the timeframes in which we'd be meeting with them. So it in fact strengthens the mandate of that committee, and to say otherwise is misinformation.

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter, you're speaking to a proposed, or possibly proposed, motion. We're dealing with Mr. Anderson's—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I recognize that.

**The Chair:** You have the floor.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's good to be back.

In response to Mr. Easter's comments about the proposed motion, it doesn't matter what he says. It says that the subcommittees possess only the powers that are conferred on them by the main committee. So this motion, which has been ruled out of order as an amendment, I would suggest, must also then be ruled out of order as a full motion. I would also suggest that the schedule we have presented is one that is in motion and that is actually entirely reasonable.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Allen.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.



I believe you had said earlier that one should conduct oneself to the motion. My honourable colleague is now addressing himself to a possible motion and suggesting how you may indeed rule on some possible motion.

**The Chair:** I think what he was doing, Mr. Allen—and I'm only going by what he said—was trying to point out that his motion had the intent of the main committee's intent and nothing else.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** I understand, Mr. Chair, that—

**The Chair:** Do you have another point of order?

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** I think what I'm saying under the point of order is that he is actually speaking to a motion that's not before us, because what he's suggesting is how you should rule on a motion that isn't now before us and isn't comparing the motion that's not before us to the motion that is.

But then again, of course, if he really wants to deal with the motion before us, let him put it to a vote and let the committee get on with its work. It's very apparent that the honourable member is very concerned about it and really wants to get at this very quickly. I would suggest that we get on with it, have the vote on the motion, and carry forward with the work that he wants us to do.

**The Chair:** Exactly, and if we allow him to get back to it, he can get on with it.

Mr. Anderson, you have the floor.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Actually, I think it's important, because the opposition has made it clear that they are going to be bringing this back, so it's appropriate to compare it to what we have in front of us. Mr. Easter has made it clear that there was a trick to bringing it here the first time, and I would expect that we could see probably another one trying to get it back here again. So I think it's reasonable to say that we've got a schedule on here that is very good; it's very solid. The one that's been proposed, and likely will be proposed again, is not of that nature.

I don't know why the opposition would object to us comparing what they've already presented when they made it clear that they're going to bring it back another time. The idea that we should be doing fall meetings out into October, into November, and into December on an issue that we've been given charge of by the agriculture committee itself I think is unreasonable. The subcommittee is meant to operate within the limits the committee has given it. Actually, the powers of the committee are given to it by the standing committee by special order. Obviously, some powers have been given to this subcommittee, but it's a much more restricted list of powers than the committee itself has. That's why we brought forward this schedule, to try to work within the restrictions that we've been given as a subcommittee, to try to put something in place that is appropriate, that deals with the subject, that will bring us to a conclusion of a study dealing with this subject.

This idea that this thing should go on forever does no justice to those folks who were affected by listeria last summer. They don't want to see this thing dragged out. The opposition has said that we're already slowing things down. It will certainly slow things down a lot more if we go until next December before we have any kind of a final report. We're saying let's get this thing done. We can do the equivalent of 14 meetings, if the opposition wants to do that, in the

next three months. That's a serious commitment to this issue, and we need to do that.

As Mr. Shipley points out, I don't think they're committed. I think that's a fair assessment of what's going on here. They're more interested in playing games for the next eight or nine months on this issue than they are of doing a serious study on it and coming to some serious conclusions with some serious recommendations.

As I've said, we can have the equivalent of 14 meetings prior to June 10. Certainly, we can have a report that's done up by June 17. Why would the opposition not want to do that? Either because they're not taking the issue seriously or because they want to play games with it.

This is a year after the events have taken place, Mr. Chair. Certainly, it's timely, and the schedule that we've put in place is an appropriate schedule to try to get things done quickly here. Maybe it's because they don't like working any more than two hours at meetings, because in spite of what was put in the amendment that was ruled out of order, the fact remains that it seems like they are not interested in working overtime to try to get this done in a timely fashion.

• (1710)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** On a point of order, who's poisoning the atmosphere? It's appalling.

**The Chair:** Order, please. Order, Mrs. Bennett.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** You put him in order. He can't attribute motivation or any of that. It's unparliamentary.

**Mr. David Anderson:** I'm trying not to be bitter myself, Mr. Chair, because we feel that we've come forward with a very reasonable proposition here, and we're just being dealt with unreasonably. It's actually a travesty that the opposition is not even willing to come over here and say....

I see Mr. Easter has left. He's not even staying around until the end of the meeting, yet he'll probably be back here to harangue us about how we're not doing things right on this issue. We at least, Mr. Shipley and I, have enough interest to at least stay here and see this through.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** That's also unparliamentary.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Do I still have the floor?

**The Chair:** You have the floor.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** That's out of order.

**The Chair:** It's not out of order.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** You're not allowed to say who's here and who's not.

**Mr. David Anderson:** As far as I know, we're not in the House of Commons, Mr. Chair, so I think we can note that Ms. Bennett is still here with us, even though Mr. Easter has left the room.

Why does the opposition not feel that the schedule is reasonable? Certainly they'll have some things to answer for. They'll probably go back to their whips and House leaders, and they'll be asked why they were not willing to go along with a perfectly reasonable schedule on the listeriosis issue. Their leadership is going to say them, "Look, these dates are fine. You can have your report by June 17. You can make whatever political hay out of that by then." The leaders of their parties are going to say, "That's a good idea. Let's get this done as soon as possible."

Instead they've apparently got together and decided—I don't know if their House leaders and their whips approved this or not—they want to go with a schedule that doesn't treat this issue seriously. It won't see the end of it for almost a year. It will be a waste of the committee's time if we're going to take nine months to come up with a final report on this issue when the crisis occurred last summer.

The government has already moved, as we pointed out, and Ms. Weatherill is in place. She's doing her investigation already. There's no reason why this committee can't take up the schedule we presented in order to get our stuff done.

• (1715)

**The Chair:** We have Mr. Allen on a point of order.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My honourable colleague is speaking to an amendment that isn't before us, talking about a report that will be at a period of time when... If he reads the amendment that he says isn't there, he will find out that the report is actually in June, and the final report on food safety will be later on. That's the way it reads. But of course it's not before us so we can't discuss it. Yet my honourable colleague continues to address it and read into it what he wants because he's not addressing it.

I suggest, Mr. Chair, you ask him to confine himself to the motion before us, which is his. If he truly wants to discuss this motion, let him vote on his motion. We'd be more than happy to have the vote. We'll move on to the second one. We'd be more than happy to let him address it.

**The Chair:** I'm certainly very happy to ask Mr. Anderson to speak to his motion. I believe it speaks to a report in June, which you referred to.

Mr. Anderson, you have the floor.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Allen just challenged us to vote on our motion and then move on to the second motion. I'm not sure what motion he is speaking about, because we don't have one here. He's been spending the last half hour interrupting me to point out that there isn't a motion. Obviously there isn't a motion on the table.

**The Chair:** We're dealing with one motion right now.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Yes, and that's what I'm trying to talk to. I'm also trying to give the opposition some options and some opportunity to find some middle ground. To me and to Mr. Shipley, it's important that we find that middle ground so that we can make this committee start to work a whole lot better than it's worked today.

Mr. Chair, I sympathize with you and the position you're in, having to deal with these constant interruptions. But again, this subcommittee is going to hear this issue. How long are we going to

take to hear it? Does the opposition actually think it's valid for us to hear from now until December on the issue of listeriosis, which occurred last year? It doesn't even make sense, unless they're trying to play some more silly tricks or to make some kind of point.

So our suggestion has been a positive one, to come back and say, look, we can do this in the next three months. It's not complicated. This is not a tricky motion. This is one that at least two of the three parties were familiar with before we got here today and that we assumed they were going to be fairly supportive of, which obviously turned out to be the wrong assumption. But to say that this needs to go on two to three times as long as we've suggested here is just inappropriate. It doesn't respect what happened last year during that whole situation. It doesn't respect the food safety system. It doesn't respect the people who were affected by this crisis.

Mr. Chair, again, this committee could go back to the agriculture committee if it wanted to, because in Marleau and Montpetit it says, "Where a sub-committee requires additional powers, it may put its request in the form of a report to the main committee." So again, if the subcommittee here has made a decision that it wants to change its own mandate, which is apparently what they wanted to do earlier today, then they can come to us and talk about it. Let's go back to the main committee and have them change the mandate of the committee to accommodate the directions the opposition wants to take. But to me, it seems that we have a clear mandate. It isn't one that we have to argue about, and it's certainly one that's mentioned in our schedule.

Actually, if the subcommittee wants powers even beyond what the main committee has, it has the right to go in a report to the House of Commons and ask for those powers. So if we want to change the direction of where this committee is going, there's nothing stopping us from getting together to sit down and do that, but there doesn't seem to be any indication that the opposition wants to do that. We have a mandate, we have a schedule. I think we should be moving ahead. Certainly we want this to be treated fairly, treated quickly, and treated seriously, and it seems that the schedule we've presented does that.

If it doesn't, then I think the subcommittee needs to go back to the regular committee and approach them and say, "We've changed our mandate. We think there are some things that are more important than what you gave us to do, so we're going to completely refocus this committee. So we're going to deal with a very narrow issue for a certain amount of time, then we're actually going to broaden out at some point in the future, maybe six, eight months from now, and we're going to do what you actually asked us to do."

I don't know why we consider ourselves able to work against the issue that was given us by the main committee. What right do we have to change that issue? I would argue that we do not have that right. Again, if Mr. Allen's amendment comes forward as a motion, I would think that it's the kind of motion that would have to go back to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for approval from the committee so that it can come back here.

• (1720)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Is this about the schedule or is it about your motion?

**Mr. David Anderson:** Am I being interrupted again, Mr. Chair? There was no—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Point of order.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** A point of order.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I feel that Mr. Anderson has already shown us his talent for delaying committee business. He did so each time we talked about the Canadian Wheat Board during the meetings of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. However, he is now also showing us his talent—which I know well—for demagoguery. He is saying that the subcommittee is going above and beyond its mandate, but this is totally false. The mandate of this committee specifically includes the study of the listeriosis issue. At the Conservative Party's request, the mandate has been broadened to deal with food safety as well. My view was that to broaden the mandate too much could pose a problem. However, it is only natural that when we talk about listeriosis, we also talk about food safety.

Mr. Allen's proposal, which we are not supposed to discuss, but that Mr. Anderson has been talking about for the last several minutes, allows us to discuss both issues. That is why the timeline is a little longer. This does not mean that the subcommittee is going above and beyond its mandate, far from it. Mr. Anderson should stop saying that.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I took it, Mr. Bellavance, that he was suggesting, maybe not appropriately, that the proposed amendment was away from that direction. I did rule that amendment was out of order, because it was.

Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Actually, Mr. Chair, to address that issue before I go back to the schedule, because I was challenged on it, I said that if the subcommittee desires extra powers and wants to go in a direction that's different from the mandate given to it by the standing committee, it can go back to the standing committee and ask for that. That's a fairly clear suggestion. I did make the suggestion that if we're not careful we could end up outside the bounds of the mandate we've been given.

Actually, I'm very surprised to hear Mr. Bellavance say that he opposed studying food safety, because, as I understand—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Chair—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Point of order.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Bellavance.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I did not say that.

[*English*]

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** This is just outrageous.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I never said that.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, you've clarified that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** No, this concerns me directly. I never said that I was opposed to talking about food safety, far from it. I never said that. It is a lie. It is totally false. I know that Mr. Anderson is only trying to provoke us; sometimes it works, sometimes it does not. But I want to put it on the record in the blues that I never said that. People reading the record of this meeting will also see that.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Your point has been clarified and taken.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, I heard that he opposed this idea of studying food safety. I'll take a look at the blues, and I'll apologize if that's not what was said.

I understood he wanted to study something more narrow; that's what he seemed to imply. He wanted to study listeriosis and not food safety. That's what he said in his—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** No.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I never said that. Never.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Anderson:** Is that what you said?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** No, never.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Anderson:** Okay, then I misunderstood what I heard. So you're okay with the food safety part?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** But you keep saying it in order to...

[*English*]

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** You know perfectly well what he said.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Of course.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Anderson:** Ms. Bennett, you have to settle down, please. I think we need to treat each other with respect here.

• (1725)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Well, you are attributing lies—

**The Chair:** Ms. Bennett, you don't have the floor.

Order. Again, for the last time.

**Mr. David Anderson:** The impression Mr. Bellavance left with me was that he did not want to study food safety in a general sense.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** It's already been clarified.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Mr. Chair, could you please intervene?

[English]

**The Chair:** That point has been clarified, Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson:** So he did want to study food safety in a general sense.

**The Chair:** He'll have to answer that; I'm talking about the clarification.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** We're in a grade three classroom.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Because that's exactly what we want to do. We want to study food safety in the context of listeriosis.

That's what has been given to us, as an assignment, by the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. That was passed unanimously by the agriculture committee. I assume Mr. Bellavance was there and certainly supported it.

It says to "establish a Subcommittee on Food Safety" in the context of listeriosis. We're willing to do that. I've made that point a couple of times, and Mr. Allen doesn't want me to repeat that.

But we want to get to work on this committee. We want to study food safety, and we want to study listeriosis in the context of the Canadian food safety system.

Mr. Chair, we can't take it outside that context. Right? If you take a look at what's going on with food safety in Canada and the specifics of the listeriosis outbreak last summer, obviously you have to take a look at it in the context of—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** [Inaudible—Editor]

**The Chair:** Ms. Bennett, order.

**Mr. David Anderson:** You have to look at it in the context of food safety.

**A voice:** It is.

**Mr. David Anderson:** That's what I'm saying.

We need to take a look at that, and our schedule is an appropriate and reasonable way to take a look at those issues in that context. Certainly, seven meetings times two should be enough to cover almost any issue, unless we're not doing our job properly. I hope if we have a couple of days to talk about this we'll be able to come to some sort of agreement that will get us under way next week. I would be willing to sit down with the opposition—and I know Mr. Shipley would as well—to try to find some middle ground so that we can begin to move this process ahead quickly. We need to find a reasonable alternative to what's been going on.

I'd like to come back to an important notion: if we don't want to abide by the directions that we've been given, then we have the opportunity to go outside and ask for some other direction or authority from the main committee. Maybe this way a motion similar to the amendment we got today could be found in order. Typically, our motion as it's put forward here is directly in line with what has

been given to us by the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. There is certainly nothing about it that would run contrary to the mandate that we've been given. I think this offers an easier way to move ahead. It's better than trying to expand the mandate, trying to find a different mandate without going back to the committee for an understanding of what they really meant when they gave us the directions to establish a subcommittee on food safety.

We would like to get this resolved next week. Next Tuesday, we want to be able to pass the motions we need to proceed and begin our hearings. Some of this we're going to have to do in the next day or two, probably away from this table, if we want to try to move ahead immediately. But it's the government's intent and the government's desire that we get to this as quickly as possible.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Point of order.

[English]

**The Chair:** You have a point of order, Mr. Bellavance.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I simply wanted to say that it is almost 5:30 p.m., and that, during his turn, Mr. Anderson said that we did not want to discuss this matter or that matter. In my case, this is completely false. He said that I did not want to talk about food safety. I want to point out to you that we have totally wasted our time for two hours, and that the subcommittee has not done its job on listeriosis. I remind you that people died as a result of that unfortunate affair. Yet, for the last two hours, Mr. Anderson has simply shown us that he does not want a serious discussion on either listeriosis or food safety.

[English]

**The Chair:** I don't think that's a point of order.

• (1730)

**Mr. David Anderson:** I'm not sure why Mr. Bellavance is trying to distort my position. That's not what I said at all. I said a number of times that we want to get to this. We want to be dealing with it seriously by next Tuesday if we possibly can. So we don't have any problem with that.

As far as wasting time goes, we were not the ones who started the wasting of time here. We're the ones who are willing to compromise and to work with the other parties as long as they're willing to communicate to us what's going on. Mr. Easter said it all when he said, in so many words, that this was a trick. He didn't want us to know that this was taking place ahead of time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Anderson, it is now 5:30. I hear the bells for votes. We're not sure of the next location, but it will be at 6:30 next Tuesday night, March 31.

The meeting is adjourned.







**Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons**

**Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes**

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:  
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

---

**The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.**

**Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.**