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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, March 31, 2009**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Larry Miller**

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

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

• (1830)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC)):** We'll call this meeting to order. Thank you, everybody. I apologize for the lack of chairs in this room.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** I'm wondering whether for the next meeting you'll move us to a closet.

**The Chair:** Let's just move to Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I would like to inform you that a deal was struck last night on a new motion for this subcommittee. I spoke with Pierre Lemieux, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and a representative of the government. They said that the opposition had provided constructive input into this motion. I would appreciate the opposition's commitment to expediting the timeline of this subcommittee. It's crucial that the subcommittee report by June. Ten months have already passed since the outbreak, and Canadians would not appreciate a delay of another nine months.

Mr. Chair, because of the consensus of the subcommittee, I'm going to withdraw my current motion that's on the table. I now ask for unanimous consent from the members of the subcommittee for this new motion, which I now move: that the subcommittee, when studying food safety, which includes the listeriosis crisis of 2008, meet on March 31, April 20, 22, 29, May 6, 13, 27, June 3 and 10; and that the subcommittee establish extra meetings within this time period as necessary; and that the meetings be between 4 p.m. and 10 p.m.; and that the meetings be televised; and that the final report with recommendations be submitted to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on or before June 11 with the request that it be reported to the House of Commons prior to June 18.

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Is it moved?

**The Chair:** Yes, I believe he just tabled it and moved it.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** We agree with the new motion. I have a little problem, though, and I think all opposition parties have. We were pleased to sit down with the parliamentary secretary to try in an informal way to come to an agreement without being hampered by motions and everything else. We appreciate the negotiations that went on, and especially the input from Malcolm Allen, whose first motion was the one that provoked this result.

I question the initial words of Mr. Anderson, however, because they make it sound as though the opposition was delaying the

hearings. That is not the case. The filibuster that occurred was by a government member. We tried to work out the scheduling and the timing for his motion. I don't want the record to be misconstrued.

But I can tell you that we on this side support the motion, and we'll do our best to hear all the witnesses prior to June 10.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** I believe we have unanimous consent.

Mr. Allen.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** This is a matter of procedure. I tabled a notice of motion prior to this meeting. So that the clerk can do the housekeeping, I am now withdrawing that notice of motion.

**The Chair:** That's so noted.

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

I have a point of privilege.

**The Chair:** You have a point of privilege?

**Mr. David Anderson:** Just as a point of clarify, I think Mr. Malcolm is withdrawing the motion regarding the schedule, not the other motion that he set forward.

Is that right? Do you have the motion?

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** It's the notice of motion that I submitted as a notice of motion to the clerk. We supplied it last Thursday, I believe—or perhaps last Friday.

**The Chair:** Is that the one referring to the minister?

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** No, it is the one with the schedule on it.

**The Chair:** That's what I'm trying to clarify here.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** We divided things into two halves. Just so that the clerk isn't stuck with a notice of motion and wondering what we have done with it, I am asking that it be withdrawn.

**The Chair:** That's fair enough. It is noted and, I would take it, all but done.

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

Now I have a point of privilege.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Allen. You have the floor.

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

I would like to bring up this point of privilege. It has come to my attention that the potential witness list for this committee was provided to individuals outside of this committee and, moreover, to companies and organizations outside of the House of Commons. This is a prima facie case of privilege that I recognize the chair cannot rule on. Therefore it is my hope that this committee will decide to report this matter to the House.

Mr. Chair, I would like to submit to you and members of this committee an e-mail chain that clearly indicates this breach of privilege—and I will provide the e-mail. I am very concerned with this breach of privilege, as it goes beyond privilege to a matter of public trust.

As all members of this committee know, a CFIA biologist lost his job for leaking confidential documents to his union back in July 2008. Now, it seems, a member of this committee has broken the privilege of this committee by leaking confidential documents. That is a double standard that Canadians won't accept. I ask that this committee adopt a report for the chair to present to the House so that the Speaker may rule on this point of privilege.

If I may, I will provide members with an e-mail chain that clearly shows that the draft list was indeed sent to others. I'll allow time for it to circulate.

● (1835)

**The Chair:** The clerk has noted that we don't have the power to report to the House, Mr. Allen. We have to report to the main committee. I think that was clear in the initial motion.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Just so that I'm clear, your ruling is that we have to report this to the agriculture committee and request them to then send it to the House. Is that what's being indicated to me?

**The Chair:** The clerk pointed that out, and I agree with him, because that was the initial motion. We didn't have the power. I don't have it in front of me, but if you remember, it said something to the effect of "except the power to report to the House". Anything that needs to be reported or gets reported goes through the main committee, and then they deal with it and what comes out of it.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Bear with me, as I'm certainly not looking to hold this up, other than to get a clear ruling so that I know where I'm going next with this privilege. The difficulty I'm having here is that I don't technically sit on the agriculture committee per se. My understanding of what you're saying is that even though the Standing Orders give us all powers except reporting directly to the House, which we're not asking to do—we're asking to send something to the House to have them decide upon it—I have to report this to the agriculture committee and, as such, then have them send it on, if it's their will; that even though I think the privilege is mine, not someone else's at the agriculture committee, I am not able to do that.

**The Chair:** From the information we've dealt with, and from the clerk, Mr. Allen, it is pretty clear that we can't report directly to the House. I honestly can't tell you whether a matter of privilege circumvents that. I would think not.

Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** On this point that Malcolm is raising, I think the point of privilege or the prima facie case of releasing information to the public, or to someone else who is within the

domain of the committee, really relates more to a draft committee report. That's my opinion, Malcolm.

I'll just give you my own experience on this witness list. I've talked to—

**Mr. David Anderson:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we don't have a witness list here at all. We've got a series of e-mails that have nothing to do with the House of Commons that I can see.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Yes, but could I just go ahead, David, I've talked to a number of people. The kinds of witnesses we're thinking about sometimes used names, sometimes didn't. Nobody I've talked to as witnesses.... I think we'll eventually have to get to the point where we may have to have witnesses in camera. Then I would expect those individuals to tell us that.

We've run into that before. You can have witnesses in camera, but that information should never be divulged, because they do fear for their jobs. That's why they come as witnesses in camera. Their names are never released. What they say is released, but it is for the information of the committee.

I know I've talked to my own contacts about some of the people on this list. If there are people on this list who have given an indication to someone that they don't want their names released, then I'm unaware of that.

The point of privilege really relates to this: if witnesses are brought before the committee and are in camera and don't want their names released, then you'd have a point there. As well, when we get to doing the committee report, if contents of that report are released before it's tabled in the House, then you would have a point there.

Maybe I'm mixing up what you're saying.

● (1840)

**The Chair:** I have been conferring with the clerk since you finished speaking, Mr. Allen. The clerk has confirmed that a point of privilege or whatever doesn't change that. We still have to go back through. Okay?

On Mr. Anderson's point of order—and I wanted to hear Mr. Easter out—I believe he may have...because I was going to bring this up myself. To speak to something like you're suggesting is fairly serious, but we have nothing here to back up what you seem to be implying, or at least in the e-mail that I have here in front of me, so I think Mr. Anderson does have a point of order on that. If, as a member, you're going to bring forth some kind of allegation, I think the committee members have a right to actually see what you're really referring to. There's nothing in this document that I have.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** I'm not sure whether you want me to reply to that.

My understanding at this point is that privilege has been raised, and I understand your ruling that it has to go back to the main committee, but is that indeed where it now should go? I don't think this is a place where we actually debate this matter. Now the issue becomes that you have ruled that it should go back to the main committee of agriculture for them to make a decision as to whether they wish to send it to the House.

**The Chair:** Well, yes, but I guess what I'm saying, Mr. Allen, is that I think we as members have a right to actually see what we could go back there with, and then we could have that discussion. I mean, you're implying something, but there's nothing to back it up; at least, I don't have it in writing, anyway, and I don't presume anybody else has.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Let me just point out what the front page says:

Subject: FW: Subcommittee on Food Safety - Draft witness list - re Confidentiality

Let me just read this, and I'm quoting:

To all

Just to clarify the somewhat confusing messaging on the earlier message. The witness list should be treated as confidential by member organizations of the Coalition and by the corporations on the mailing list. It has not been publicly released and should definitely NOT

—my emphasis—

be used by recipients in any discussions that they might have with members of the committee.

Clearly what they're saying in their header is that they have the draft lists, and they're asking recipients not to talk to any members about the draft list—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** There isn't a draft list.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Actually, there is. There is a draft list, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Bennett.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I think all of the parties were asked to submit suggestions for possible witnesses. I don't believe this committee has decided whom we will hear or not hear. Quite often when we have a list of people, we're thinking about calling in the health committee, I will show it to people and say, "This is who I'm thinking of calling. Is there anybody missing from this list you would want added?"

I think, in view of the sensitivity of this study, this committee should develop a protocol for confidential suggestions of people who do not want to have their names used because of a fear of losing their jobs. There should be a very specific protocol for this committee for the witnesses we would want to hear in camera. I think it is something this committee should deal with.

When I was on government operations committee dealing with Radwanski or a study as sensitive as that, we ended up having to develop a different system whereby we could only see the blues in the clerk's office. There was that kind of sensitivity.

I'm not aware that there's any agreed-upon list of.... "Potential witnesses" means potential. Whether at the steering committee or in this committee, we have not decided who we're going to hear from.

I am just not sure about the point of privilege. Draft reports are serious breaches of committee business. I've been in many committees in which the draft reports have been leaked, and it's not pretty.

• (1845)

**The Chair:** We're nowhere near there.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** But I'm not aware that there's been any agreement that lists of potential witnesses wouldn't be shared.

**The Chair:** Ms. Bennett, I agree with you on a number of those points. My point is that Mr. Allen is suggesting that some member of the committee spread something around. This e-mail does not show or say that at all. It indicates that somebody has some names or what have you, but....

You seem to be alleging...in fact, you did say, I believe, that you think it came from a member of the committee. That's a pretty strong statement, unless you can back it up. That's all I'm saying.

Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson:** I would agree with Mr. Easter's and Ms. Bennett's points, that there is no point of privilege.

The only list of witnesses here is a list that's supplied by Mr. McAlpine. I assume it's his list of witnesses to whatever this is—the Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition and their members. That's fairly straightforward.

**The Chair:** I didn't even look at it—

**Mr. David Anderson:** I think we should move on to some other business. If the NDP want to bring it up at committee, they have the right to do that.

**The Chair:** After hearing all this, I'm pretty convinced, Mr. Allen, that it's not a point of privilege, but if you come forth with something more substantive, we can go from there.

The next order of business we have is a notice of motion by Mr. Allen.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** That's correct. I'll just read it into the record:

That the Honourable Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture, be ordered to provide to the Subcommittee on Food Safety copies of all the briefings and communication book or books provided to him by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Department of Agriculture, and the Public Health Agency of Canada regarding the listeriosis crisis of 2008.

Mr. Chair, I would suggest that to help us get a handle on what has transpired over that period of time, it's important to us to get all of that additional information, which some may have and some may not have, depending on whether they are able to work their way through the access to information system, which of course we have made attempts to do.

At this point, we've made the requests. In fact, we made them some time ago. We were told it would cost us \$325, which seems to be the fee. We found that a little unacceptable, in the sense that we're not sure why we'd have to pay \$325 for all of that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Allen, was it your office?

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Yes, our office was requested to pay \$325 to get that information. It was probably a couple of months ago that we made the request.

We have worked with the access to information coordinator for CFIA to narrow the focus of the request. However, from the communication going back and forth, it became clear to us that, according to the ATI, there isn't a briefing book. We found it rather unusual that there wouldn't be one, but that indeed is what they told us: that they have never put a briefing book together, which I find highly unusual, when we consider that 20 folks died of listeriosis in the summer of 2008—and the minister didn't receive a briefing book.

It seems to me that if there isn't one, and according to ATI there is not, what we need to do is get the minister to provide us with all the documentation, whether it be loose pieces of paper or whatever it happens to be—notes jotted on whatever. We really need to get all of that information and we need to receive it probably yesterday. Obviously that hasn't happened, so we look forward to it immediately.

**The Chair:** Is there further discussion on Mr. Allen's motion?

Mr. Shipley.

• (1850)

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** We agree, and we support the motion in terms of getting all the information. It's our understanding that the minister's office has been asked and is preparing the material for the subcommittee. I think it's been mentioned that it will happen as soon as we can get the package put together. I don't know when that will be, but we have a motion now that sets out our timeline for this subcommittee.

As I said, we will be supporting it, and just to follow up with Mr. Allen, it is being prepared as we sit here.

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I will speak in favour of the motion, Mr. Chair. I believe we need to know the paper trail within the Prime Minister's Office as well. If we have to handle that by a separate motion, we can do so another time. We know that a lot of the discussions were in fact with the Prime Minister's Office and we know that Ms. Weatherill doesn't really have the authority to investigate either the minister or the Prime Minister's Office. We will consider whether to put a motion forward specific to that area.

Rather than complicate it, I'll say on this motion that we're certainly supportive of it. There is a two-week break coming up. I expect that we would want the material supplied to this committee prior to the meeting on the 20th.

**The Chair:** Is there further discussion on the motion?

Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, if the opposition wants to make informal request for these kinds of things and want to come to us away from the meeting, we're willing to sit down and talk to them and try to accommodate them. I don't know that we need to go to formal motions on a lot of these requests. If they feel they need to, they can do it, but certainly we'd be willing to try to work with them on these issues.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

If there is no further discussion, I'll call the question.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The clerk has brought up the list of witnesses. Our main motion doesn't deal with the order, but I think the instructions are pretty clear to the clerk and me, when it comes to scheduling, that we want to hear all these witnesses. We have the timeframe in the motion. I know there's been some discussion about having the minister here, and I believe that's in the works as well.

Mr. Easter is first, and then Mr. Allen.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Chair, I understand that we had discussions; the minister can't be here on April 20, and it may be a little later in the month. He's at the G8 or wherever he may be. We understand that, but in the initial week we really have about six hours each day, and we need to think about how many we can do in a meeting. We've all had experience at committees and we certainly need the time. There are seven of us on this committee, so we need the time to be able to question the witnesses appropriately.

With regard to the meetings on April 20 and April 22, since the minister is not available, in the initial week we certainly need to have the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Ms. Swan, Brian Evans, and other officials. We need Ms. Weatherill early on as well, in order to find out where she is going in terms of her investigation and to have an indication of what road she is on. As well, early on we should meet with Michael McCain on the listeriosis side, and probably Bob Kingston or somebody from the union.

We really need to hear from those people early on, and probably officials from the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food as well. The minister won't be here until later in the month, but we need to hear from them early.

• (1855)

**The Chair:** You are suggesting, Wayne, that you'd like to have some department officials before we see the minister. Is that what I'm hearing?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Chair, for the first couple of meetings in terms of the background information on where the government was relative to the listeriosis issue, we should have CFIA on its overall responsibility for food safety and food inspections in this country. Then in the initial meetings we need to have some of the key players. Those include the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food; CFIA; Ms. Weatherill, who is doing the investigation; Bob Kingston; and Michael McCain. Those are the people who can set the stage for other witnesses who will be added later for the broader issue of food safety. No doubt those witnesses will raise questions on others we may need to bring in.

One I missed would be people from the Health Canada.

**The Chair:** Good.

I have Mr. Allen and then Mr. Anderson.

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

Although I have no disagreement with Mr. Easter around the basic format, I did put together a work plan. I thought we could use it not necessarily in its totality, but it might give us a sense of framework. Obviously we can move it around. There are some names beside dates as we progress through the meeting dates. Some of it is actually in line with what Wayne said, in the sense that we thought Minister Ritz would be the first person, but clearly his scheduling isn't going to make that happen, so we would shift that around.

This would give us a template, if you will. It's not cast in stone and it wasn't meant to be. It was simply meant to take a look at how we want to format this so that we actually have a work plan to work from. Of course I am very amenable as to where we want to slot folks and how we want to categorize it so that we can move forward.

I'm pleased to hear from the other side, from Mr. Anderson and Mr. Shipley, that we all want to move forward. They are saying that. This was not meant to say how it should be, nor is it my intent to say so. It is simply a template into which we can put some names. I am hearing Mr. Easter repeat some of the names that are actually in those slots.

To be honest with you, I took this template from what Mr. Atamanenko did at the agriculture committee when he formulated a template as well. When I saw Alex make a work template, I thought it was a pretty good idea. I remember the conversation at agriculture when the chair said we could shift one thing and move another.

That is why this isn't meant to be cast in stone. It's not presented as a motion. Obviously it's a work template that we can all give input to and use to see if we can get ourselves on track, so that we're not going from meeting to meeting asking if we are calling this person or that person next week.

That is what this was intended to do, and that's why I'm sharing it.

**The Chair:** On that matter, Mr. Allen, it's fine as long as the clerk's and my hands aren't tied. You know what happens sometimes when you go to get somebody and they can't come. If we could have a generalization and an idea of who the committee would like to hear first, my idea over the two weeks is to work with the clerk to have him set up the first four meetings for the first two weeks and, when we come back for the first one, maybe discuss it a little more. I've seen before that sometimes things change, and your thought about someone you might think would be a good witness or somebody you might want to see in the third week could change in that time.

Does that sound half reasonable?

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** I absolutely concur with it, Mr. Chair. The reason I referred to Mr. Atamanenko is that I believe those were his exact words to you, as chair of the main agriculture committee. I remember your explanation then and I concur with that explanation.

I think that's fair. Things do change and are fluid, just as when we informally met yesterday with Mr. Lemieux about how we would structure the meetings of the committee. We might have two, or one extended one, based on everyone's availability, in the sense that we all want to make sure we get the work done.

That's why I said this isn't written in stone; this is a very fluid document. It simply gives us the template to slot things in. I'm very amendable to the fact—you're right—that there may be some folks

who will say they'd rather have this person than that one. As we move through the schedule, we could indeed do that, and that's the whole intent. I'm certainly not looking to tie your hands or put one hand behind your back, Mr. Chair.

• (1900)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Anderson.

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

I agree with Mr. Easter and with Mr. Allen for the most part in what they're asking. I think government expects requests like this. I'm told that the CFIA, the Public Health Agency, and Health Canada officials can be available on the 20th and 22nd, and that the minister, who is going to be away until after the 20th, is willing to come on the 29th, if the committee is willing to have him at that point. I think we have a kind of general work plan for those first few meetings, if people want to do it.

I also have a question for the other committee members. Do we want to do our planning in camera or in public? If we're going to do it in public, then we'll all need to come prepared to do that. It's up to the committee.

**The Chair:** Am I to take it, then, that the clerk and I can use this as a guideline?

Mr. Bellavance and then Mr. Easter.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Does the subcommittee follow the same rule as the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes. I was going to speak to that right after this.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I didn't think I would have to bring this up again, after several years as a member of this committee, but we have received some documents in only one official language, in this case, in English. They were not circulated to us by the clerk, but rather by a Member's assistant. This schedule is useful to our work. I understand very well the intent of this document, but I would like to be spared having to remind people that all documents must be circulated in both official languages.

We're not off to a good start.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** André, this didn't come from the clerk.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I realize that, and I did not blame the clerk either. I'm merely asking that we comply with this operating rule.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, that's fair enough.

Mr. Allen.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** I take Mr. Bellavance's point. He's absolutely correct that it should have been in both official languages. I certainly take responsibility for that, Mr. Chair. It did not come through you or the clerk. It should have been done, but for our haste to try to get things together very quickly. Unfortunately, I'm still unilingual, albeit trying very hard to become bilingual. But that's going to be a challenge for a little guy like me who came from Glasgow; it's not necessarily going to happen overnight.

We'll do our best to do that. I assure Mr. Bellavance that any documents we prepare from my office will go through the clerk, so that they can be in both official languages. I sincerely apologize to Mr. Bellavance for not having that done.

**The Chair:** Okay.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I wasn't being critical of the fact that Mr. Allen is unilingual. I simply would have liked you to block the distribution of unilingual documents.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I think he understands that.

Mr. Easter.

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

Based on the discussions we had, I would expect the clerk could come forward at our first meeting with a rough schedule of witnesses. We're in agreement on starting with the CFIA, Health Canada, and a couple of others that we talked about earlier.

It is two weeks until our first meeting. It would be useful if the clerk could make contact with the individuals on here. I'm sure others will be added, but the clerk could come forward with a work plan laying out when those witnesses would appear.

**The Chair:** That is exactly what I'm hoping to do, Wayne. If the clerk's time allows it tomorrow, we'll do that. Then he can go ahead, and we'll at least have the first four meetings—two a week—ready to put before you as a schedule. Hopefully they'll all be booked and ready to come. I see no reason why we can't do that, especially when they'll have two weeks' notice.

Go ahead, Mr. Bellavance.

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** I have a suggestion to make about the schedule. Since we've agreed that our schedule was flexible and that committee meetings could go on until 10 p.m., it would be a good idea if the clerk could schedule as many witnesses as possible for our first few meetings. That way, we would be sure to get to all of them. Everyone understands that there are not that many meetings left from now until June and the summer recess. It would be a good idea to invite as many witnesses as possible to testify early on in the process.

That's my suggestion: use up the entire time slot, if possible. If we have fewer witnesses at one meeting, then we'll wrap up at 8 p.m. However, it would be nice to use up the full time slot, if possible.

[*English*]

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

I think we have that in the motion. It allows for the timeframe. We will do that in there. I would be quite surprised if we don't have some six-hour meetings.

I think we all know that once you get sitting around here, sometimes for three hours or more, you're not as sharp. At the same time, there are a number of witnesses, and I think there's a commitment on all sides to get to all those witnesses. Having two meetings a week certainly gives us a little more leeway. We may have more meetings, but they may not be quite as long. As long as you'll allow us to work on that, I think we can get through this witness list.

Go ahead, Ms. Bennett.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** First, I want to know if this committee will have a website.

**The Chair:** You'll have to start it up. It won't be me.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** The Library of Parliament has the capacity to set up a website. I would also like the phone number and the e-mail address of the clerk to be clearly supplied on the website for anybody who would like to testify in camera.

Next, I would urge that the work plan have a space for one in camera meeting for people who may not feel comfortable testifying. Wherever they work, people who are worried about their jobs—and not just government people—need to be able to make that kind of discreet request to help with the work of this committee.

**The Chair:** First of all, Ms. Bennett, I might be wrong in saying that I don't think you need a website in order to contact us or to appear here in camera, but I don't think I am. I don't know whether any of the committees has a website. I honestly can't tell you that.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** We did as the—

**The Chair:** Okay. On to the next issue—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** No, no. I want to tell you why.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I would like the Library of Parliament and the clerk to look to the work we did in the subcommittee on persons with disabilities, because there was almost a library of documents and a way that citizens could help us do the work.

This is about rebuilding public confidence. I think they need to look at the documents that we're looking at and have easy access to everything. I want to know if there is any way the Library of Parliament could help with the creation of such a place, a place where citizens can actually follow the work of this committee.

**The Chair:** Duncan was just saying that there's a committees directorate website for all of the committees, and that could probably be used to do what you're suggesting.



We'll go back to the in camera issue. As Wayne mentioned earlier, we have had witnesses at the agriculture committee who were in camera, and for a reason. I would suggest, Ms. Bennett, that the witnesses we contact will indicate that they want to appear in camera when that is the case. The clerk will then basically bank them. We will probably get more than one, or at least there's that possibility. Certainly anybody can request an in camera meeting if there's a reason. I don't see that being an issue.

Go ahead, Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson:** I was just going to point out the website—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Again, my concern is for it to be as easy as possible for witnesses to come forward to this committee, and for them to have a discreet way of coming forward to the clerk. That's all. I just think it's hugely important that people who know something that could be helpful...

We don't know who those people are. They need an ability to come forward knowing that their names will never be seen anywhere and that we will treat their testimony with the utmost confidence.

• (1910)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Please continue, Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson:** I think you've made the point that we'd be glad to do that for them. Certainly I think this subcommittee is going to get a fair amount of attention. If people want to appear, they'll know we're doing our work. I think they'll contact either you or the clerk of the committee.

**The Chair:** Mr. Allen is next.

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

I hear what Ms. Bennett is saying around this issue of confidentiality and those who, for whatever reason, may not want to actually appear publicly. I think we can ask the clerk to ensure that we have the mechanisms in place to allow that to happen. It has happened in other committees. It did indeed happen with the folks who work in the sex trade; a group of prostitutes testified without being identified.

I think we may indeed find that some folks may want to give us some testimony or information but do not want it attributed back to them in public. It seems to me that if we ask the clerk to do that, it would be appropriate to do so.

**The Chair:** As I said, Mr. Allen, I think that's certainly something we can deal with when the time comes. It's certainly allowable.

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

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Another issue I mentioned earlier is that I think if there's any way at all that we can find the time—and it couldn't be within these dates, because we need all these dates for witnesses, but I wouldn't care whether it was on a Saturday or whenever—I really do believe that we have to tour the Maple Leaf plant, a smaller operation that maybe CFIA inspected, maybe a farm that's...*[Inaudible—Editor]*...under HACCP, and if at all possible, a port where imported product comes in from other countries that CFIA inspects.

I do not believe there is anything like witnessing on the ground how things operate to give us a good understanding of how CFIA operates, what the rules are, what's expected of the plant operation, what's expected on the lines. I'm just asking you, as Chair, and the clerk to give that some consideration. If we could find agreement at committee sometime to take a day and do that.... I don't know if it's possible, but personally I really believe it's necessary for us. I've been through all kinds of slaughter plants, but I believe for the benefit of the committee it's important to physically see how these plants operate, how CFIA operates, what the rules of the game are, and how management operates, etc.

**The Chair:** Mr. Easter, could I suggest that we have 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. every day here, and indications of more days with meetings? Could I suggest that we get a way into this and see how we make out? Right now, it's probably a little bit unfair to expect members, on top of what they've done—not that this isn't important—to do weekends. Maybe a month or six weeks down the road we could be clear—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Or the week off in May.

**The Chair:** I don't know whether that will work for members.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Let's keep it in mind.

**The Chair:** Yes, I'm not dismissing it.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** It would be really helpful. Some of the labour unions explain their role in the plants as well.

**The Chair:** Okay, point taken.

If there's no further business, then I move that we adjourn. We'll see you in two weeks from Monday.





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