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Chair

Mr. Merv Tweed

Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

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•(1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC)): Thank you and good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities, meeting number 42.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Monday, October 5, 2009, we are dealing with Bill C-37, an act to amend the National Capital Act and other acts.

Joining us again today from the Department of Transport are André Morency, Simon Dubé, and Kim Thalheimer.

From the Department of Heritage we have Philippe de Grandpré, legal counsel.

When we last adjourned, we were discussing the subamendment put forward by Monsieur Bélanger to the Bloc for amendment. We have it in writing, and I'm getting it printed so people can actually see it. We replaced the words "submit to the" with the words "lay before each House of Parliament, for approval, a master plan".

Again, just to refresh everyone's memories, if the subamendment and the amendment as amended are adopted, then amendment LIB-4 cannot be proposed, amendment LIB-5 is immediately adopted, and amendment G-6 cannot be proposed.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Parts of G-6 cannot be proposed.

The Chair: We can do something, I think, with agreement, but basically, as it stands now, it would not be proposed.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Chair, before that, I just want to clarify where exactly we are.

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): I'm not sure.

The Chair: We're discussing the subamendment. We're on clause 10.

Mr. Brian Jean: Are we on page 8?

The Chair: We're on page 12.

Mr. Brian Jean: It's just going to take me a second.

The Chair: For everybody's information, we're on clause 10, page 12. There's been an amendment put forward by the Bloc, BQ-4. Monsieur Bélanger has offered a subamendment to BQ-4, and basically that's where we left the discussion last time.

Again, just for the interest of the committee, if BQ-4 with the subamendment is adopted, then LIB-4 cannot be proposed, LIB-5 is adopted, and G-6 cannot be proposed.

Does everybody understand that?

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Can you run that again, please? Translation didn't get it the first time.

The Chair: If the BQ-4 amendment is accepted with the subamendment, then L-4 cannot be proposed, L-5 is adopted, and G-6 cannot be proposed. In the subamendment that Mr. Bélanger has introduced—and I'm hoping that the copies are going to be here very quickly—he is basically amending it by replacing the words "submit to the" with the words "lay before each House of Parliament for approval a master plan". This would make the BQ-4 amendment with the subamendment go to:

force, the Commission, after consultation with the public and governments of the provinces concerned, shall lay before each House of Parliament, for approval, a master plan

Go ahead, Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: I think we beat this horse to death last time. The government is opposed to this on the basis of some of the substantive parts of it, but primarily because it's going to exclude G-6. For the record, we're stating that at this stage. If G-6 needs to be amended, we can deal with it at that stage.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bélanger.

Oh, was Mr. Volpe...?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): He can ask first. He's a guest. We want to treat him properly.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I'm not a guest here. I'm not just going through.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: He is an honoured former member of the committee and a special guest.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the committee staff for their research on the consultations. I had time to read the first page, at least.

I want the committee members to look at the last paragraph of that document, in either the English or the French version. It says that the National Capital Commission's public consultation process was studied, and it was noted that the same practice has been observed within the organization previously. The current public consultation process is even described in the NCC's guidelines; have a look at Appendix B. Therefore, we can assume that the legislative amendment will simply formalize an existing practice.

I think it is important to take note of that information. On Monday, we seemed to get a bit caught up in the meaning of the term “consultation” versus “participation”. I am very glad to see that the term “consultation” was not a problem. The practice is commonplace at the NCC. This simply formalizes what it is already doing, what it says in its internal rules. I hope that the Bloc Québécois's amendment, BQ-4, dealing with public consultations and the governments of the provinces concerned, will be accepted, just as the amendment was accepted requiring a master plan for the nation's capital to be submitted for approval to each House of Parliament.

I do not think it is too much to ask the country's parliamentarians that, as representatives of the people, they make a decision on the capital city of all Canadians once every ten years. Several pieces of legislation require us to do so more often than that. We review the country's banking laws every five years, and Parliament is asked to make decisions on them. In my opinion, parliamentarians should be asked to make a decision regarding the master plan for the national capital region once every decade.

•(1540)

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Volpe.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank Mr. Bélanger for adding what he's just added for us.

I was wondering about BQ-4. You said that we would make a change by removing the last three words and then adding the amendment, but you had indicated that you wanted to go to what was essentially amendment L-4. You did not say to eliminate the words “force, the Commission shall”. I think you said just simply “lay before each House of Parliament”.

I didn't have this in front of me, so I ask that question. With reference to “for approval, a master plan”, I gather what you're saying is that we're considering BQ-4 and L-4, the amended item, as one. Is that it?

The Chair: Basically, if amendment BQ-4, with the subamendment, is adopted, amendment LIB-4 then cannot be proposed but is included.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: It's included. It's one and the same.

I just wanted to make sure that at least I had the right thought here. Otherwise I was going to say that I wanted to stick by amendment LIB-4, given that the parliamentary secretary has already given us some direction about not supporting this particular amendment because he wants to have a larger discussion on amendment G-6, on an ideological basis, I gather, not on any procedural basis.

Mr. Brian Jean: I think we all know what's going on. I actually am ready for the question.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: I just flew in this afternoon, so I don't know what's going on.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Volpe, you're so sharp, it doesn't matter where you're flying, you're still there.

The Chair: Monsieur Nadeau.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Chair, I want to say that we still support the proposed amendment, especially since it is essential for the various stakeholders, who are already very involved. I am talking about people at all levels of the National Capital Commission, on both sides of the river, people in Chelsea, Wakefield and Pontiac. They have always taken a keen interest in the area's development and improvement. Furthermore, by conducting this study, the Conservatives have recognized that it was time to put an end to the lack of transparency that was rampant in the past, when too many things were done behind closed doors. Right now, we cannot get more transparent. So, in that respect, we are very satisfied, and we support the proposed amendment.

•(1545)

[English]

The Chair: Merci.

(Subamendment negated)

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: Now we're going to amendment LIB-4.

Monsieur Proulx.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Amendment LIB-4 is fairly simple, Mr. Chair. We don't think it should be only decided by the Governor in Council. We feel that once every ten years is not exaggerated to ask each of the Houses of Parliament to approve the master plan. This is, after all, the national capital. Therefore, we are submitting this amendment.

It says very clearly, “the Commission shall lay before each House of Parliament, for approval,” meaning debate, the whole shebang, “a master plan”. It's very straightforward.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will just advise the committee again that if amendment LIB-4 is adopted, it would apply to amendment LIB-5 and amendment G-6 could not be proposed.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Chair, the government thinks the proposal by Mr. Proulx is excellent. That's why we're going to be voting against it but included it in amendment G-6.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Mr. Volpe.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: I prefer to have a bird in the hand rather than two in the bush, so I think it's important for us to reiterate the fact that a decision every ten years on the national capital region ought to be debated in the House of Commons and in the Senate of Canada in order to get a sense of what the master plan would be. I don't think it's all that onerous to turn around and say yes, we accept that, in this. There's no need for it to go into another amendment. I think this is the one that we should support.

The Chair: Monsieur Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Chair, given the comments of Mr. Jean a moment ago, is there paper? Does he care to put what he just said on paper?

Mr. Brian Jean: Page 14.1.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: This doesn't say "approval".

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: It's "lay before".

Mr. Brian Jean: You're absolutely right, Mr. Bélanger. It doesn't. I misread that.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: My question, Mr. Chairman, is that Mr. Jean said you would incorporate LIB-4—

Mr. Brian Jean: I didn't say that. I said it would exclude G-6 if your amendment is taken.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Chair, a moment ago Mr. Jean asked to speak and he said that the government is going to vote against LIB-4 because it would include it in G-6. That's what he said.

Mr. Brian Jean: He's asking for approval, so—

• (1550)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: If that's the case, can I see that on paper? That's not the way I read G-6 currently.

The Chair: Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: I'm so glad Mr. Bélanger pointed that out before we had the vote. I would have felt that I had deceived him, and I don't want him to feel that way. Absolutely, he is correct. I was wrong in what I suggested. It's not for approval.

It is actually G-6 that we do not want to see excluded. We'll be voting for the wording in G-6 and we will be voting against your amendment.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: But not to include it in G-6.

Mr. Brian Jean: The words speak for themselves.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: G-6 is different.

Mr. Brian Jean: It is, right. That's what Mr. Bélanger pointed out.

The Chair: Are there any further comments?

Monsieur Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I have difficulty understanding why the government would be opposed to having Parliament approve a master plan for the national capital once every ten years. That sounds like wanting to keep all authority for the executive and not sharing it with the legislative branch of government. As a legislator, I have to resist that.

I would urge all my colleagues, including those who purport to be great defenders of the role of Parliament in a democracy, to seriously consider adopting L-4.

The Chair: Monsieur Nadeau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Chair, I am disappointed with what just happened, the vote we just lost. We did it for the good of the National Capital Commission. We wanted more involvement in the decision-making process, as well as public involvement.

This is a key point. It is paramount that elected representatives in the House of Commons be able to debate and make decisions regarding the National Capital Commission's plans for the future. Then, elected officials could solicit the opinions of members of civil society—given this opportunity we have just lost.

First of all, it is extremely important to finally have all the transparency needed for the cities in Quebec and the City of Ottawa, as well as other cities in Ontario, to work with their respective government on improving these cities, which are affected by the National Capital Commission. We support L-4.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have bells ringing. They are 30-minute bells.

I'm looking for direction from the committee on whether we want to continue or we have to leave—

Mr. Marcel Proulx: With that snow storm, Mr. Chair, God knows what could happen when we try to cross Wellington Street.

I only have rubbers; I don't have my boots, I don't have my heavy winter mitts. My mother always told me when you go out in a storm to be careful. I wasn't careful this morning, so I—

The Chair: I'm going to suggest that we return immediately after the vote. It's a 30-minute bell, so we should be back here by around 4:30.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: So this meeting will reconvene at 4:30?

The Chair: Well, right after the vote. It's 3:53 according to this clock.

Am I wrong?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: The vote is in half an hour, and it takes ten minutes to vote, so there's no way we can reconvene at 4:30. Say, ten minutes after the vote.

The Chair: Okay, ten minutes after the vote then.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Or fifteen, depending on the buses.

The Chair: Let's say ten minutes after the vote.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: There's a big storm out there, Mr. Chairman. You never know—

The Chair: The meeting will resume ten minutes after the vote.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: I don't think they have their snow tires on those buses yet.

The Chair: Whether you're here or not, the meeting will start.

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_____ (Pause) _____

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• (1645)

The Chair: When we left we were discussing L-4, presented by Monsieur Proulx.

I have Monsieur Laframboise on my list. Please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Going back to the amendment moved by the Liberals, once again, I have a hard time wrapping my head around the fact that the provinces are not consulted. I also have a hard time understanding the position of the NDP.

I want all of our colleagues, including the Conservatives, to ask themselves a question: if this happened in my province, would it be acceptable not to consult the province? I see that as a major problem.

Later, I will probably try to move a friendly amendment regarding G-6, because it would be a good idea to consult the provinces.

[*English*]

The Chair: Any further comment?

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: As a matter of record, Mr. Chair, I wanted to say to Mr. Laframboise that's how I felt yesterday on the national housing act when there was a clause put in by the Bloc member in relation to excluding Quebec and didn't allow for a friendly amendment to exclude other provinces.

So I understand exactly how you feel.

The Chair: Mr. Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: During the vote someone raised the matter with me that I think needs to be addressed, Mr. Chair. The comment from my colleague from the New Democratic Party was that we don't submit to Parliament for approval plans of our national parks. I have to disagree somewhat with that, Mr. Chair.

I refer my colleagues to the Canada National Parks Act, section 33, where it talks about park communities. I understand that we differentiate in that act between parks that have communities within them, essentially Banff and Jasper, and the other parks. For those parks—and there's another one, but those are the two principal ones—that have communities there's a separate process delineated in the Canada National Parks Act, which does give to parliamentarians the ability to reject certain elements of it. So if I'm being told that one is not prepared to support the notion that parliamentarians would be called upon once a decade to approve a master plan for the nation's capital, in which 800,000-plus citizens live—over a million if you include the national capital region—where we do give that ability to parliamentarians for the community plans of national parks, then I would hope that those who believe otherwise would reconsider and indeed give parliamentarians the ability.

As an aside, we are actually giving parliamentarians the ability to approve this plan, but only those who happen to sit in cabinet. That's where I have a problem. If the legislatures in this country are to be effective they cannot carry on ceding all their authority to cabinet. Here's a chance, where we're asking parliamentarians once a decade to pronounce on the plan of the nation's capital. I would hope we would see our way to approving that.

• (1650)

The Chair: Shall L-4 carry?

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Recorded vote, please, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'd started.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: We'll want a recorded vote.

The Chair: Proceed.

(Amendment negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: L-4 is defeated.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

Since we've had a vote, I'd like to move my notice of motion, the one that was sent out on Monday, and I would like to read it into the record:

That the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities extend meeting hours on Wednesday, December 9, until 6:30 p.m. and/or Thursday, December 10, from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. or other agreed upon time in order to complete clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-37, an act to amend the National Capital Act and other acts.

The Chair: Debate?

Mr. Volpe.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: As much as I would like to accommodate our colleague from Fort McMurray, the parliamentary secretary, I don't think the Liberals will be able to support this motion, for a variety of reasons. I shan't go into all of them, but we are going to go to a vote at about 5:15 to 5:30 and we're going to repeat this process of coming back and forth. There is unpredictability with respect to votes for tomorrow, and we're not in a position where we want to interrupt the schedules that have already been established for tomorrow and for this evening. So we're not going to be supportive of that motion, regrettably.

The Chair: Monsieur Laframboise.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In the case of Bill C-37, I think all the parties showed their good will; there was a desire to study the bill in a collegial manner. I get the feeling that there is a major lack of understanding, most likely from the government, which, initially, had reached out to us. I remember what the minister came and told us, that they were going to try to introduce a bill that would please everyone, and then, they decided to go it alone.

The government probably has the support of the NDP. I want to warn the NDP members and tell them to make sure that the interests of the National Capital Commission are being protected. I think that wanting to rush through this debate does nothing to protect the interests of the public, the National Capital Commission or elected officials. It is clear: by not allowing the House to study this matter, by not allowing the provinces to be consulted, we are disregarding a democratic principle.

This bill should be debated for however long is available; there is no need to rush through it or to try to study it as quickly as possible for strategic reasons. We owe it to the public to take the time that is necessary.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Hoepfner.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: I actually think we need to look at this in great detail, and not rush through it. I would propose a friendly amendment that we go right until 8:30 tonight.

• (1655)

Mr. Brian Jean: I would accept that friendly amendment.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Okay.

The Chair: So we're debating the subamendment.

Monsieur Bélanger.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I have two things to say. The first is a question for you, Mr. Chair.

If the friendly amendment is accepted, the motion would read: "... Wednesday, December 9 until 8:30 p.m. and/or ..."—that is where I have a problem—"... and/or Thursday, December 10 from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. or ..." It includes the word "and" because it is in the same sentence, "or other agreed upon time in order to complete clause by clause consideration ...".

What I am wondering is who would decide upon another time to complete the study. Does that give the government or you, Mr. Chair, carte blanche to call another meeting at an agreed upon time to complete clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-37? Clearly, what the government wants, without putting it in writing, is to complete clause-by-clause consideration tomorrow in order to report to the House on Friday, if I understand correctly. That was my first comment.

It seems that Mr. Jean wants to respond on your behalf, Mr. Chair. My question was directed at you.

[*English*]

The Chair: If the motion is accepted, I would probably assume the responsibility for finding an agreed upon time for tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: That is what I thought. So, it would give you carte blanche. In that case, my answer, which is also my second comment, Mr. Chair, is this: absolutely not. You know we are at the end of the session, and there is no way that we will hurry things along, that we will try to fast-track a bill, which, initially, seemed to please everyone and on which everyone seemed able to agree.

Mr. Chair, I represent a riding in the National Capital Region. There are people who are very concerned by the direction that the NCC, in some cases, or the government is trying to take. I think we need to slow down and take things at a reasonable, respectful pace, not rush anything or act like a bull in a china shop.

I cannot support this, and, if the motion is adopted, I challenge you, Mr. Chair, to find an agreed upon time.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: If Mr. Bélanger was proposing a friendly amendment to have specific times and only include up until tonight, my understanding is that the Liberals have a party tonight, a Christmas party, and I don't even know what time it starts, because obviously I'm not invited. So maybe I can—

Hon. Joseph Volpe: You're invited.

Mr. Brian Jean: Thank you, Mr. Volpe.

Maybe you can advise us what time it starts. I'm certainly open to a friendly amendment to determine the times here now.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Chairman and colleagues, I gave an indication that we couldn't support this, not because we don't want to do what's right by this bill. You know that in the three years that I've

been part of this committee no other bill has received as much attention as this one has so far and has received the good wishes and the cooperation of committee members like this bill has so far. The only other one had to do with the introduction of a safety management system, and with that one, we spent a lot of time on clause-by-clause.

In my experience, a bill of this nature where the minister came forward and said he would like to have the cooperation of everyone because he wanted everyone to be happy with the bill was again an extension of the cooperative nature of the committee.

This motion suggests that the cooperative disposition has somehow evaporated. I must agree with my colleague Mr. Bélanger that the open-ended nature of the motion really does strike at the heart of the intention of trying to do something in a deliberative fashion.

We have so far in this committee, on other bills and in this one in particular, tried to come up with a decision. Yes, on occasion there has been slight little political jazz, but I challenge anyone on the government side to say we haven't been looking for a way to resolve any differences. In fact, the minister acknowledged as much when he invited members of the opposition to sit with him in an open-ended discussion, which some members took as an opportunity to present amendments and others as an indication that subsequent to that meeting they could develop some amendments. We even said, let the government bring a whole series of amendments to this discussion, to clause-by-clause. This is a huge number of amendments from a government for one of its own bills. That's just to give you an indication of how predisposed we and the opposition have been to being reasonable about this.

So this kind of motion, quite frankly, jars us a little bit. On the procedural component of it, we can't find it acceptable; and on the substantive implications, I think we need to be able to give the bill its deserved attention and its requested attention—requested by the minister. If we were to follow this motion, if we were to accept it, we wouldn't accomplish either one.

• (1700)

The Chair: Monsieur Nadeau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Chair, like several of us on the opposition, I am a member who is directly involved with the NCC issue, on both sides of the river. In fact, we have given it not just our time, but also our hearts. We have also met with our constituents and spoken with those at the NCC. We have been studying this bill and its proposed amendments since June.

Keep in mind that, when Lawrence Cannon became the minister responsible for the NCC after the January 2006 election, he, himself, moved to increase transparency within the organization. Those changes were welcomed by a number of stakeholders including municipal officials, environmental and ecological groups and Gatineau Park conservation groups. They wanted to do everything possible to implement those measures.

Amendments to bills such as this one arise every 25 years or so, if not more. So shoving this down our throats is not a good way to do things. And nothing is going to change if we keep working on this bill in January or February.

Those who are worried about an impending election need to know that is not what they should be focusing on. Instead, they should be thinking about making the bill the best it can be and allowing us to study it until 5:30 p.m. Regardless, we have commitments elsewhere, and it is the end of the session. There are other factors at play, and the situation is not pressing. This is not the time to put the cart before the horse.

Let's use the time we still have left. Let's take part in the parliamentary legislative process we all know so well. And if the debate needs to carry over into the new year, then it will carry over into the new year. At least that way, we will have heard all the arguments—even if all of our points of view cannot be successful—and that will give rise to the best amendments possible under the circumstances with respect to a bill that is very dear to many people in the region.

I will vote against the proposed motion.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bevington.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): In my mind, the mood on the committee suggests that this is not going to be adequate to deal with the clauses going forward in any case. I think in some respects we've dealt with this bill in an odd fashion, in that my understanding was that there was to be extensive consultation with the minister, that there was a consensus process in place, and that some of these issues would be aired out beforehand and the clause-by-clause would be more easily accomplished.

The sense I'm getting from this is that it is a fruitless effort to continue the committee's hearings at this time, because there are many parliamentary procedures that will eat up the hours that are put forward in this bill.

The Chair: Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: I was going to bring up a point of order when Mr. Nadeau was speaking, but obviously the feelings on the committee are such that they do not want to proceed with this bill before Christmas. I was hoping that we could all find consensus to move forward and try to get it done so it could go to the other place as soon as possible. But if that's not the case, if you can't find time in the next two days to do it, then I withdraw my motion, as long as the amendment is withdrawn.

I don't want to have bad feelings about this. My point is that I've received a lot of pressure from the other parties to get this matter through as quickly as possible because of the consultations that have happened in the communities, and if that's not the feeling of the committee members, then I withdraw that motion, because I just don't want to have that kind of feeling in this committee. We do work very well together.

• (1705)

The Chair: Well, we will—

Mr. Brian Jean: If I may, Mr. Chair, I would encourage other members that if they could find time in their schedule tomorrow, I think we could still deal with it by that time, if we have a special meeting.

The Chair: Okay, the motion has been....

Monsieur Proulx.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: I think my name was on the list, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: I just have to ask whether the motion has been withdrawn. I'm not sure what we're debating.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Has it been withdrawn?

Mr. Brian Jean: The motion has been withdrawn, absolutely.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: There was a friendly amendment.

The Chair: And the friendly amendment.

Mr. Brian Jean: I'm just trying to get this done. That's the purpose of it.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Chair, I was going to ask if the death of the minister's cat was still making people obsessed, because that's why the minister was late with this.

The Chair: Mr. Bevington, on a point of order.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: We have a vote at 5:15 with no bells, so I'll have to excuse myself.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: No, they're all 15-minute bells.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: The bells will be at 5:15.

The Chair: At 5:15 there will be 15-minute bells.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Those aren't the instructions I got from my lobby.

The Chair: Well, we have nine minutes. What's the will of the committee?

Mr. Brian Jean: My understanding is that unless the bells have happened and there's unanimous consent to continue, we can't continue, the same as unless there is unanimous consent we can't stop. However, I could be wrong.

The Chair: On amendment G-5, Mr. Jean.

We've agreed by unanimous consent that it's an amendment that can be presented.

I will stop the meeting the minute the bells ring, and we'll adjourn for the season.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Chair, this particular government amendment was put forward in developing a master plan to require the NCC to provide opportunities for public comment across the country. I think that's what it does, as well as containing the principles and objectives of the greenbelt, which we've said.

The Chair: Is there any comment?

(Amendment agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: We'll now go to amendment G-6.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Chair, this is one on which there are obviously some mixed feelings on this committee, but certainly I would suggest that the boilerplate structure of amendment G-6 is very effective and efficient. It's going to require the master plan to be put before the House of Parliament. It also requires some other issues, including that there's a timeframe that must be adhered to.

The Chair: Mr. Proulx, on a point of order.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: So that we can confirm on the record the disposal of Liberal-5 amendment, this was a result of a previous vote, right?

The Chair: The vote on L-4 defeated L-5.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry about that.

The Chair: No problem.

Monsieur Bélanger.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: It says if L-4 were to carry, L-5 would be negated. Isn't that what you had said?

The Chair: They go together, in the sense that if one is voted for and accepted, then L-5 is automatically accepted. If it's defeated, L-5 is automatically defeated. L-4 was the amendment that impacted L-5. We voted to defeat L-4; therefore we were defeating L-5 at the same time.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: This is....

The Chair: When I introduced BQ-4, I said that if it was adopted, L-4 cannot be proposed and L-5 is adopted.

When L-4 is applied, it automatically applies to L-5, but it was defeated, so L-5 would automatically be defeated at the same time.

Mr. Jean.

• (1710)

Mr. Brian Jean: It also deals with timeframes, in that the master plan laid before Parliament cannot be approved before either 30 sitting days or 160 calendar days after the master plan is laid before the House of Parliament.

Finally, in 10.31, the management of Gatineau Park, I did have a question for our officials at a meeting prior to this in relation to immovable objects. It's set out in law that the commission is going to manage any property of the commission that is immovable in regard to the pursuit of recreational activities.

The Chair: Debate?

Monsieur Nadeau.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Are we still on G-6, Mr. Chair?

[English]

The Chair: Yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I would like to move an amendment to what it says here.

Mr. Mario Laframboise: I think it has to be a friendly amendment. It has to be accepted.

[English]

The Chair: It can be proposed. You can propose a subamendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: In paragraph (2), where it says, "In the development ...", I would add "and at the same time ...".

Mr. Mario Laframboise: At the end of paragraph (2).

Mr. Richard Nadeau: At the end of paragraph (2), I would add, "and at the same time, for consultation with the provinces concerned."

[English]

The Chair: So you're offering, Monsieur Nadeau, after paragraph (2)—

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Yes, at the end of paragraph (2).

[English]

The Chair: —where it reads "for public comments at the national and regional levels" and you're adding the following.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Yes.

The Chair: Can you just repeat that please?

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I will repeat it, "and at the same time, for consultation with the provinces concerned."

[English]

The Chair: Okay. So we have a subamendment to the amendment.

Mr. Brian Jean: We have a proposed subamendment.

The Chair: Well, actually, anyone can make it.

Mr. Brian Jean: Whether it's friendly or not?

The Chair: Yes.

We will move to debate on the subamendment. Any comments?

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: I would just say, if I can, that the public includes all of the provinces and territories. They're certainly invited to make public comments at the national and regional level. I think that would identify them both. I would suggest they're already included within clause 2...to allow them to provide comments.

The Chair: Monsieur Laframboise.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: I find the government's answer, that is, the answer given by Mr. Jean, more troubling. I understood that he did not want to consult with the public, because consultations took place in the rest of Canada. But, when we talk about consulting the provinces, we are not talking about the same consultation process. What we are adding is provincial consultation, otherwise, the provinces could just submit their comments, which would be treated like everyone else's. We want real consultation.

I repeat what I said earlier. Think about this: if you had a national park in your riding, be it in Alberta, Saskatchewan or British Columbia, and the province was not consulted.... I have a really hard time.... It is your prerogative not to support it, but really think about it first.

As far as public consultations go, I can see how you would not want the process to drag on forever. But, as for provincial consultations, the province, the government and the NCC all have an equal interest in resolving the issue. I do not think that is too much to ask.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Volpe.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: It seems to me that, up to this point, the subamendment, Mr. Nadeau's suggestion, makes eminent sense in the debate with respect to previous amendments. It doesn't make a lot of sense—or a lot of reasonable sense—for the commission to provide opportunities for public comments at the national and regional levels, and not include contemporaneously or beforehand a discussion and consultation with the provinces that share part of the responsibility.

We had some pretty interesting observations with respect to what happens on the bridges that might be in part administered or at least have the cost borne by the two provinces associated with those bridges. To then say that it's not necessary to have their input in the development of a master plan would seem a little less than logical.

I think Mr. Nadeau is absolutely right to suggest that in order for number two to be acceptable—I didn't get the exact wording in

French—there would have to be a similar consultation at the same time or before with the two provinces in question.

● (1715)

The Chair: That's what I see in Monsieur Nadeau's subamendment. It's basically consultations take place at the same time with the concerned provinces.

Is that a pretty reasonable interpretation?

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Well, in the development of the master plan. I see a sequential issue.

The Chair: Right.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: So I see the consultation with the provinces taking place first, and because it's only a consultation, it's not going to be one that we've already rejected—that there's going to be debate, the two provinces would be consulted before the establishment of a master plan, and then that master plan would go to the communities and the regional authorities in order to see if there is a willingness to make some adjustments or not.

I don't recall exactly the wording that Monsieur Nadeau provided, but I thought it was sequential wording.

The Chair: With that, I'll wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and we'll see everybody in 2010.

Thank you to our staff and people that help us around here. I hope you have a good holiday season.

The meeting is adjourned.

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