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CANADA

# **Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, September 29, 2010**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. Bruce Stanton**



## Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

• (1535)

[English]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Graeme Truelove):** Good afternoon, honourable members. Welcome to the committee, and welcome to the new committee room. It might interest members to know that this is actually the very first committee to meet in any of the new rooms.

Seeing a quorum, we can now proceed to the election of the chair. I am ready to receive motions to that effect.

It has been moved by Mr. Dreeshen that Mr. Stanton be elected chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

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

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC):** I would like to nominate Bruce Stanton.

**An hon. member:** I'll second it.

**The Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC)):** Thank you very much—a very difficult, difficult contest.

**An hon. member:** Congratulations.

**The Clerk:** Before inviting Mr. Stanton to take the chair, if the committee wishes we can now proceed to the election of vice-chairs.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** I nominate Todd Russell.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Neville nominates Mr. Russell.

Are there any further motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** *Allez, mon Todd from Labrador.*

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

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare Mr. Russell vice-chair of the committee.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** *Merci beaucoup.* Thank you very much.

**The Clerk:** Are there motions for the second vice-chair?

Monsieur Lemay.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** I nominate Ms. Jean Crowder.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Lemay nominates Ms. Crowder.

Are there any further motions?

[English]

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** Ms. Crowder is duly elected second vice-chair.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Clerk:** I will now invite Mr. Stanton to take the chair.

**The Chair:** *Merci beaucoup.* Thank you very much for your indulgence on a very toughly fought contest.

My congratulations to each of the vice-chairs, who you all will know—with the exception of, I think, our one new member since our last committee constitution. We welcome John Weston as a regular member of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

As I'm sure you all know at this point, we also welcome a new parliamentary secretary. Some changes took place just prior to resuming the session. We welcome Ms. Shelley Glover as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Welcome to all. We don't really have any other items of business in front of us here today.

However, am I given to understand,

[Translation]

Mr. Lévesque, would you like to introduce a motion to the members of the committee?

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** My motion follows up on the implementation of the Nutrition North Canada program to replace the Food Mail program. Since its inception...

**The Chair:** Just one moment, Mr. Lévesque. Excuse me.

Mr. Bagnell, you have the floor.

[English]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Can you explain how these new translation things work? In particular, how do you get the volume higher?

**The Chair:** The channel selector is on the bottom. You can rotate that left or right, to choose the channel, and the volume controls are on the top.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Is everybody okay with that? *Voilà*.

We have a motion by Monsieur Lévesque. The motion was circulated to the committee towards the end of the session. However, that said, we had only one item of business—I'll get to you, Mr. Payne—on the orders of the day for our committee today. I would just ask if there is consent to proceed to committee business for the purposes of entertaining Monsieur Lévesque's motion.

Mr. Russell.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** First of all, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your re-election. I want to welcome the new members that we have with us, Mr. Weston, and congratulate Ms. Glover on her new appointment. I look forward to working with you and your colleagues throughout the course of this session. I also welcome back, of course, our committee staff and all returning members.

I would just like to remind members what the motion is. I think I might have it in front of me now.

**The Chair:** Just to be clear, before we can actually consider the motion, we do need consent from the committee to proceed to committee business.

Mr. Payne, did you have a point that you wanted to add in that respect?

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and congratulations to all the chairs and vice-chairs, and welcome to our new committee members, in particular John and Shelly.

I just wanted to support Mr. Lévesque's motion. I think we've already started a study. We've had one meeting and I think it would be appropriate to continue the study on nutrition.

**The Chair:** Your point is noted. But just before we carry on, do I have agreement to proceed to committee business?

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Yes.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** The motion distributed to the members of the committee reads as follows:

That the committee request the terms and conditions of the new *Nutrition North* program so that its members can study the program and the Committee report its observations and recommendations to the House.

[English]

The motion did meet the notice requirement, so we now have it on the floor and we'll take speakers to the motion.

● (1540)

[Translation]

Mr. Lévesque, would you like to introduce your motion?

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I take this opportunity to congratulate you. I'm also welcoming Mrs. Glover.

There has always been a certain cordiality in our committee, and we sincerely hope to maintain it. That will allow us to move forward with the work a lot faster than in many other cases.

We listened to a presentation on the new Nutrition North Canada program. Department officials vaguely explained to us what the program was about and how they were planning on implementing it. At the time, the methods were not clear. Even the current minister, who was at that meeting, did not understand very well. He did not understand the gist of the program and its impacts.

In my opinion, in the interest of the communities being served, it is important to know the real impacts of the new program. It is important to know who will come out a winner, the communities or those serving them. That is why it is essential for the committee to make sure the program is implemented since it was established for the good of isolated communities in order to provide them with fresh food products at lower prices. Are we reaching this goal or are we moving further and further away?

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any questions on this motion?

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC):** Am I first on the list?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Thank you.

First, I would like to thank everyone for inviting me to appear before your committee and for being so welcoming. It is a pleasure for me as a Métis woman and as someone who cares deeply about the Aboriginals in our country.

I completely agree with the spirit of Mr. Lévesque's motion. But could we correct the translation? The French translation suggests that the committee “*fasse*”, or do, a report, whereas the English version says that it “can” do a report. I would like Mr. Lévesque's intent to be clear so that the English and French texts say the same thing. I think he really wants a report and does not want the committee to decide whether to do one after the fact.

I would also like to know the details he needs so that the department can start working on the presentation. The English version says “terms and conditions” and the French version talks about “*modalités*”. What does that mean? Could Mr. Lévesque explain what he wants exactly?

I would also like to inform the members of the committee that the website really has a lot of information. In my opinion, this program will be fantastic for Aboriginals and for all people living in the north. I encourage you to read that. This project touches on a number of areas and will help to improve the situation of Aboriginals, especially in terms of health and nutrition.

I just wanted to share these ideas with you and ask Mr. Lévesque to shed some light on these issues.

[English]

**The Chair:** By all means. Go ahead, Mr. Lévesque.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Thank you very much. I would be happy to try and clarify my intent as much as possible.

The program currently in effect was established 30 years ago and still continues to develop. In the past, it used to be in effect though it was not subsidized. It was created specifically to serve the territories north of Quebec—known as Baffin Island at the time and called Nunavut today. It was done at full cost for the Inuit on these territories and on some territories northeast of Quebec.

Later on, subsidies were awarded to carriers so that communities could get perishable products at a reasonable price and so that people would be motivated to use healthy products and be in better health.

And now we are changing the Nutrition North Canada program. At first glance, the broad strokes of the program are commendable, but, as we often say, the devil is in the details. In this case, we don't know how these subsidies will be applied, or who the watchdog of the program will be, or how frequent supervision will be. Ultimately, when will the program be introduced in the community, and how much will people have to pay? Will prices be lower or higher? Are we going to be able to have higher or lower quality products? That's what matters most at the moment.

I'm not denying the department's good intentions. When we met with Minister Strahl, he seemed surprised about the implementation of the current Food Mail program, with Canada Post as the national supervisor, which ran a tight ship in applying the criteria of the program. Could we now apply the criteria that we want to establish for the Nutrition North Canada program in the same way?

I'm not sure if that gives you a clearer idea of the issue. It will become clearer when we hear from the witnesses who have already applied the program criteria and those who want to do so today in order to make recommendations to the minister based on what the committee will decide.

• (1545)

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay.

There was a slight difference in the interpretation of the question. In the English translation it indicates that, to pick it up partway through, "its members can study the program and the Committee can report its observations and recommendations to the House." It seems that in the French version it is in fact intended and expected that the committee indeed report to the House. I would suggest to the committee that you might consider, if you're willing, to remove the second "can" in that. In other words, it would read "can study the program and the Committee report its observations and recommendations to the House."

If that's acceptable, we can take that as an accepted amendment—not an amendment but a correction to the translation.

Is there agreement to do that?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay. I think we've clarified that point.

[Translation]

I have another question for Mr. Lévesque. How many meetings will be required for this study? One meeting?

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** I think more than one. I would like to hear from the person who was responsible for the program at Canada Post. I would like all the members of the committee to hear those who were previously involved in the program. I would also like to hear from department officials. They will probably be able to clarify some things, but that might take a full meeting—just so that the officials can clarify everything.

We know the details of the old program. We talked so much about it that we know everything that went on with that program. Many changes have been made in the new program, so we will have to examine a lot of things. To be able to make a fair decision, we will have to know the ins and outs of the program. That may require two meetings, if not three.

• (1550)

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Russell, and then we'll go to Mr. Dreeshen and Mr. Clarke.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly agree with what Mr. Lévesque has said. Certainly this is an important program for constituents in Labrador, throughout northern Quebec, and indeed the north, in places like the Yukon, NWT, Nunavut, of course, and in some of the northern regions of the provinces.

When I've had a chance to review the website that's referred to in INAC, not all the terms and conditions have been set out yet for that particular program. There are some facets of the program that are going to be finalized, as I understand it, before April 1, 2011, when the new program is supposed to come into force. It may be an opportune time to get in touch with departmental officials to see just when those terms and conditions are going to be made known to us, so we can give this a real hearing.

My second observation on this would be that this study is important and we should do it.

In terms of the timing of it, seeing that we still have our northern economic development study under consideration and we have a draft report, could we adopt this motion and then refer it to the steering committee for the timing of this particular study?

**The Chair:** Certainly the committee can do what it wishes. We can determine our own work plan on that basis, and we will need to discuss the whole work plan for the coming session. I would take it as a given that if this motion is adopted, we would consider it in addition to the other work we have in front of us. The committee can decide what the order of that would be.

I was particularly interested to know the number of meetings Mr. Lévesque was anticipating.

Let's go to Mr. Dreeshen.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Thank you.

Just to comment on the number of meetings, as Mr. Lévesque has indicated, there is a lot of detail and there would be a lot of people. I would make the suggestion that if we're looking at three or four meetings, I think perhaps that would cover that.

The other aspect of this, and it's just a friendly amendment... Nutrition North Canada is the program. Do we want to put that into it? That's what's on the website. That's my suggestion, that we actually call it by its name.

**The Chair:** We have a suggestion. Is that agreeable?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

Mr. Clarke.

**Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm just looking at the announcement. When the announcement was made, it was just prior to when the House rose. It was back on May 21, 2010, when the minister made the announcement. The program will come into effect. I'm just looking at the website and I've pulled up some interesting numbers, or just the dates. It was announced that on April 1, 2011, the food mail program will be replaced by the new food subsidy program, Nutrition North.

I'd just like some clarification from Mr. Lévesque. We are looking at a study on nutrition and how many meetings we are going to need. When looking at the website and at his motion, much of the information, from my understanding, is on the website.

Are we looking to clarify some of the tabs that were pulled up? Are we looking at the food mail program network, or are we looking at the destination points? Are we looking at the postal rates, shipments to businesses and government agencies, the funding, and the eligible and ineligible goods?

I'm just wondering. Three meetings might cover it. What is his suggestion?

**The Chair:** I'll take that as a question.

[Translation]

Mr. Lévesque, do you think we would need three meetings?

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** I think that will do.

[English]

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

Ms. Glover.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to reiterate, as Mr. Russell said, that this is an important study. We've heard it many times in the House. The health and welfare of many of our aboriginal people, particularly when we're talking about diabetes and these kinds of things, is pressing and a priority issue.

I believe we have two hours today that we've all scheduled. If we can proceed with the work that Mr. Russell has suggested we do in

the subcommittee, we might get it done today, and take advantage of the time that we do have. I would suggest that we do have a report that we're in the middle of trying to get through. I would suggest perhaps four meetings to go through the report and then move directly to finish this study, because you are already into the study and I believe it is a priority. Then we can continue with the motion that Ms. Neville put forward. There is now a motion that will be discussed, which Mr. Russell has put forward.

I think we ought to start with the report that we're well into, for which I would suggest maybe four meetings. I've seen the report. I don't think it's going to be very contentious. Then we can move to at least three meetings on this immediately following the report.

We ought to decide that here in committee today, so that we take advantage of the time.

● (1555)

**The Chair:** We're kind of gradually shifting into a discussion around the work plan. That's a question we can come to.

I would like to wrap up our consideration of the motion that's in front of us and then we'll come to this other question.

I have Ms. Crowder and Mr. Bagnell on the list.

Is this on the motion?

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** It is a point of clarification. My understanding was that we were going to adjourn the meeting and go into subcommittee to talk about the schedule.

**The Chair:** That is correct. We gave notice to the members, the vice-chairs, and subcommittee members that the intent today, because we didn't have anything else scheduled, was that we could go directly to subcommittee after the main committee adjourned.

Mr. Bagnell, was that your question as well?

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** That was part of my question. I was just going to emphasize how important this report is for me too.

**The Chair:** Of course.

Are there any other interventions on the motion as amended?

**An hon. member:** Question.

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

**The Chair:** The motion is adopted.

Thank you very much, Mr. Lévesque.

On the issue of the work plan, Ms. Glover has suggested, given that we have an hour and 30 minutes remaining in this meeting, that we could use this time to consider the work plan in front of us. I'd be happy to take any comments on that suggestion and then we'll decide.

As members know, subcommittees are creatures of our own making. They are not compelled by the House. We have used the subcommittee procedure to set the agenda in this committee for some time. Other committees elect to do it differently. It is entirely up to us how we choose to proceed in this matter.

I have Ms. Crowder and Mr. Lemay. Ms. Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I was just going to say the subcommittee seems to have served us well. I think I would strongly encourage us to use the subcommittee and come back with some recommendations for the full committee, rather than take everybody's time here today.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Lemay, you have the floor.

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Chair, we studied Mr. Lévesque's motion, but we also have Mr. Russell's motion that we received, was translated, and complies with... If we were to agree to debate Mr. Russell's motion today, I have nothing against the subcommittee looking at how we would address this motion if it were adopted. I believe everyone received it. I am not sure whether we can start debating it today. At the very least, we would have already studied two.

[English]

**The Chair:** Merci.

Again, we're raising a different question here. We're going to try to do one at a time if we can. You have raised an interesting question as well.

Are there any other interventions on the question in terms of whether we wish to use the time in the main committee to consider the workplan for the fall?

Mr. Bagnell.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** I agree with Ms. Crowder that the subcommittee works well and we should leave it to them to do the scheduling.

**The Chair:** Okay. Ms. Glover.

• (1600)

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** I feel a little bit like a fish out of water, because I'm so used to committee members wanting to be included that I'm a little surprised to see committee members who don't want to take advantage of the two hours they have to have input on a subject. So I really feel like a fish out of water.

I believe it's important that we hear as many members as possible when we have the time. Subcommittees typically are used when we don't have enough time to do what we need to do in committee. They are not used to replace the committee. I would say that the fact that we have a subcommittee that doesn't vote and yet there's a routine order that says that we all get together except the parliamentary secretary doesn't vote.... I would like to bring a motion forward to deal with that, so that we can start off the subcommittees on the right foot, so to speak.

I am going to put my motion forward right now with regard to the subcommittees. That is, when we're talking about subcommittees there is a section that says that the subcommittee routine motions include everyone, except that the parliamentary secretary will not have a vote. My understanding is that your subcommittee is a discussion committee and you don't vote anyway. So we need to fix that motion.

So my motion is that the committee seek an amendment to the subcommittee routine motions to delete, after parliamentary

secretary, the following: "who will not have a vote". Therefore, the routine motion will read: That the subcommittee on procedure and agenda be established and be composed of the chair, the two vice-chairs, a member of the other opposition party, and the parliamentary secretary. In that way, we at least have a subcommittee that is equal.

Then again, we need to go back to whether we use our time as a committee or we defer it to a subcommittee. I frankly want to hear all of your opinions. I think your opinions are valued. I think your opinions are worth while. If we ever run out of time, absolutely, I'm willing to be part of a subcommittee that decides these things, but I don't think it's impossible for us as a committee to do these things together.

**The Chair:** Just before we proceed to the list of speakers, the motion to make the amendment to the routine motions is not a substantive motion, so it can be accepted under the rubric of committee business. So we can put it in front of the members here this afternoon. We will have to set it aside a moment until we make this final decision about moving into subcommittee.

I've got Mr. Russell, Ms. Crowder, and Mr. Lemay. Was there any other intervention on this question about whether we finish the meeting here today?

Mr. Russell.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** My understanding is that we would adjourn committee business and move into subcommittee or steering committee business.

I've been on this committee I think for five years. We've operated in this way for the entire length of time. We seem to function very, very well as a committee, and we have achieved most of our goals in terms of getting through studies, dealing with our legislative responsibilities and legislation that has come before us. On the understanding that we would move into subcommittee today, I would suggest that is exactly what we do.

If at a later committee meeting we want to address motions dealing with the rules of the standing committee.... Even my particular motion was not received in the 48 hours, and I would have had to move it and get unanimous consent from the committee in order to have it heard. I was willing to defer that until we move into committee business again.

My feeling is to do what we had intended to do, move into the subcommittee, report back, and then deal with other motions at that particular time. Even though, Mr. Chair, I respect your ruling—you ruled that it's not a substantive motion and therefore doesn't require the 48 hours' notice—sometimes with these things it is nice to have a little heads up on what's coming down from a procedural basis.

That would be my recommendation, and that would seemingly be what my colleagues want to do today.

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

Ms. Crowder.

• (1605)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I concur with Mr. Russell.

I think the other issue is that there is certainly no intention, from my experience in being on this committee for many years, to shut the rest of the committee members out. What has happened is the subcommittee does a lot of the hard work, comes back to the full committee with recommendations, and it is the full committee that decides on its agenda.

So in the best use of everybody's time, I would still urge us to continue with the steering committee, the subcommittee, and report back.

I agree with Mr. Russell's comments about the other motions.

**The Chair:** Okay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lemay, you have the floor.

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** I don't have much more to add, but I would like to explain something to the parliamentary secretary. Our committee has delegated the responsibility of establishing the procedure and the agenda to the subcommittee ever since it was created. When we come back before the committee, the agenda is presented. The committee as a whole may decide to review the agenda. Not all committees operate in the same way, but the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development decided that the large 12-member committee should not sit all the time and that the subcommittee would be responsible for pruning down the daily routine and preparing the meetings in order to save time.

For example, if we adopt—we have since adopted it—Mr. Lévesque's motion, the subcommittee will set the number of meetings and make a recommendation. It will probably also ask the members of the committee if they want to call witnesses and to let the subcommittee know as soon as possible. It would be the same procedure for all the other motions. With all due respect, that is why I find the parliamentary secretary's motion premature. So I encourage her to withdraw it, even if we discuss it in subcommittee. Otherwise, we would certainly not be able to support the motion if we had to vote. It would be a shame to start our work with the parliamentary secretary by defeating her motion. I urge her to withdraw this motion and present it to the subcommittee, which will be sitting in a few minutes.

To conclude, Mr. Chair, I would like to point out that it has been like this since 2006. The subcommittee is made up of representatives from each political party. The subcommittee decided that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development would be present to provide us with information that will allow us to move our work forward. Initially, there was only the chair of the committee, the two vice chairs and a representative—in this committee's case—from the Bloc Québécois. We wanted to be more open and allow the parliamentary secretary to be present without the right to vote in order to get information and get things done faster.

Let's take Bill C-3 for example. We ask the parliamentary secretary to check with the minister when he'll be available to appear before us and so on. That way, we save a lot of time. For us, the subcommittee is like a working committee that reports to the

Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. It saves us a huge amount of time.

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

We will now go to Mr. Dreeshen and then to Mr. Weston.

[*English*]

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Thank you.

Maybe it's just the new surroundings, but I'm certainly not concerned about staying for the extra time. If we talk about this for an hour, it's a different situation.

I think if we have the time there's no reason we couldn't be working together to try to hammer out some of these issues we're talking about. That's my comment.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Weston.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Lemay for speaking French more slowly for us anglophones.

Normally, I would completely agree with Ms. Crowder and the other members of the committee. Actually, if we could save time, that would allow us to do something else. But I would prefer it if we could all work together for two reasons. The parliamentary secretary has occupied this role only for a little while and she perhaps is missing some information. She would probably like us to work together. Since I am a new member of the committee, I am personally interested in getting a better idea of what is happening and of what the committee is able to do after the subcommittee finished its work.

● (1610)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Merci, Monsieur Weston.

Ms. Glover, and then we'll come back to Mr. Clarke.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Thank you.

I would like to clarify something. In subcommittee, the government side does not have input. We are the only people who don't have a vote. This is not balanced, not fair. This is why, rather than remove my right as a member by putting and enforcing a subcommittee that does not allow the government to have a vote, I would like to see this committee do their work. This committee is supposed to be here for two hours; let's get to work and be fair to all members. Under the rules and regulations, we all have a vote. Under this subcommittee that you've designed, the government has no vote. That's why I am opposed to it.

I would like to get on to the business of the day and move forward.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Clarke.



**Mr. Rob Clarke:** I'd like to reiterate what Mr. Weston said and what our parliamentary secretary also had to say. I've been on the committee now for almost two and a half years, and I just don't understand how the inner mechanisms work in the subcommittee. I'd like to see it work in a proper parliamentary fashion.

Sometimes when I'm asked by the constituents, and sometimes the first nations leaders, what actually transpires for the selection of witnesses, and what occurs, not during the committee meetings, but in the subcommittee meetings, I cannot offer an honest answer to what actually takes place. If we start going in open discussion working together, as parliamentarians have to do, it would be very justified. When we're trying to represent aboriginals and first nations and give them the proper input and work together as parliamentarians here, I would like to see us work together within government. This would give us an opportunity to have a proper democratic vote. If that's going to be withheld, I don't think it's justified.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I have Mr. Payne and Monsieur Lemay.

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've been on this committee for two years, and I never know what's going on in the dark halls of the subcommittee, which I find somewhat disturbing. As a member of the committee, I have no input. It comes back and it's pretty much decided from the subcommittee what's going to happen in committee. It would be appropriate for all of us to be able to participate in those subcommittee meetings, if you want to call them subcommittee meetings, in the decisions on what we are going to study that are brought forward to the committee as a whole—the studies we're going to have and the witnesses who will appear. From that standpoint, it's quite appropriate for all of us to be part of that whole process.

Thank you.

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

Monsieur Lemay.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** We are not out of the woods yet. I will try to be calm. I will tell you how it works. You don't have to believe me, but this is how it works.

Not long ago, not even six months ago, Mr. Duncan was parliamentary secretary. He has been blessed. He is now the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. When Mr. Duncan was parliamentary secretary, he never complained. He always said that he did not need the right to vote because he represented the minister at our subcommittee and that the purpose of his participation in the meetings of our subcommittee meetings, to which we were kind enough to invite him, was to tell us what the minister's progress was on such and such an issue.

I hope I am being clear and I am sure that the translation is fantastic. Never did the subcommittee work in isolation without reporting to the full committee. The only thing the subcommittee does is to prepare the order of business according to the committee's request. We give you a report. There were six meetings last year and we always gave you a report. Not only do we produce a report, but

we ask you what you think. I personally have been sitting on this committee since 2006 and never did we summon witnesses to appear if you did not want them to appear and never did we refuse witnesses that you wanted to appear.

But today I am slightly taken aback. If that is what the parliamentary secretary wants, I will immediately ask for a vote on her motion and she will experience her first defeat. So, Mr. Chair, I ask for a vote on the parliamentary secretary's motion if she does not withdraw it.

• (1615)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay. I hear your question. I still have two speakers, so on this particular question we have to continue, and we will. When we're finished with speakers, we'll ask the question.

Madam Crowder, followed by Mr. Payne.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I'd like to echo some of Monsieur Lemay's comments. I find the tenor of the conversation that we're having today pretty disappointing. The subcommittee has been serving the whole committee and the so-called backroom discussions that have been alleged here are discussions that came out of what happened at the whole committee.

Often what we do is meet outside of these committee meetings—so we're having to find other time outside of these committee meetings—to conduct the business of committee, and it is at the will of the committee. We then report back to the committee for a full discussion and a vote on what the committee determines as its business.

Now, as Monsieur Lemay has pointed out, the parliamentary secretary has been here to provide information to the subcommittee. The government is represented through your very able chair, Mr. Stanton, and we have generally worked on a consensus basis at that subcommittee, so it has not been an adversarial, partisan kind of exercise. We work through trying to represent the needs of our own constituents and first nations, Métis, and Inuit across this country.

To this point, we haven't heard complaints about how the subcommittee has worked. In fact, I think because of the work this committee has managed to achieve it speaks to the calibre of the subcommittee's work, so I would agree with Monsieur Lemay. If that's the way we want to go, we should go to the vote.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Crowder.

Mr. Payne.

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** Thank you again, Mr. Chair.

Just on this subject, Mr. Lemay did talk about the parliamentary secretary being okay with this process. My recollection when we first came to this committee was that there was a discussion, in fact, as I recall, that the parliamentary secretary did want to participate and be able to vote, as the government did not have a vote on this. Now, you could check the blues on that. I might be wrong, but that's my recollection of the situation at that particular time. Of course, as I recall, it also was voted down that the parliamentary secretary would not have a vote at the subcommittee.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Lemay, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** I would like to clarify one thing for Mr. Payne. I remember very well that the parliamentary secretary was not initially present in the subcommittee. That poses a serious problem. Later on, the parliamentary secretary asked to participate. Not only that, we asked the parliamentary secretary to be present to help us move our work forward.

I can assure you of one thing, and correct me if you need to: there has never been a vote in subcommittee meetings and never will there be one. If there were, how would we proceed with our work? We have never held a vote, we have always relied on a consensus. That is why we invited the parliamentary secretary. In my opinion, today's debate on whether the parliamentary secretary should be present or not is a red herring. We want the new parliamentary secretary to be present, but we don't want her to have the right to vote. I do not want to give her the right to vote because there will be no vote, period. The subcommittee is made up of the chair and a representative for each party and we work by consensus. It is great for the parliamentary secretary to be present, but we certainly must not give her the right to vote.

●(1620)

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

Ms. Neville, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wasn't going to speak on this issue, but I'm sitting here in amazement listening to this discussion.

I had a period of an intermission from this committee, but I've been on this committee for at least five years. It has been a model of working well.

Do we always agree? No, but there has been cooperation, and since you've assumed the chair you've conducted fair and smooth meetings. There has never been an effort, or an overt effort, to impose the executive branch of government into the legislative branch of government. That's the distinction here.

This committee has worked well together. I've never been on the subcommittee, but it has worked well. The committee has ratified and has determined its agenda.

It's the old saying: why are you trying to fix something that's working? I'm astounded.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Thank you, members, for that very vigorous discussion. This has been a discussion about the intricacies of how we manage committee business. It is certainly a valid discussion and one that helps inform the way we go forward and the way we work together.

At this point we will be considering the question, then, as to whether the committee proceed....

Oh, I have another intervention. Pardon me. Madam Glover, go ahead.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I hear what everyone is saying.

There are people here who have said they want to be included. Maybe not on that side of the room, but on this side of the room, there are people who want to be included.

I want you to hear that clearly: these people want to be included. When we have two hours of time, they would much rather discuss committee business together, which is not a function typically of a subcommittee unless there is no time.

They want to have the ability to vote. I too want to have the ability to discuss and vote.

But what Mr. Lemay has said very clearly, Mr. Chair, is that no one on this side gets to vote, because we don't care if you want to be involved, we don't care if you want to vote, and we don't care if you want to have discussion about committee business, we're going to do it in subcommittee. Nobody on this side gets a vote.

I'm sorry, but that's not democracy. That's not fairness. We're asking you to include us. We're not trying to be adversarial. We're asking you to include us. Allow us to learn. Allow us to take full part. Allow us to share. Our communities have given us voices. Please allow us to use these voices to make recommendations that matter to this committee.

Four people on this committee should not be deferred to if other people on this committee want to speak. It is now 4:25. We could easily—we still have an hour—allow these people to speak, to make some progress on committee business, which isn't going to take us an hour. It's going to take us another hour of debate, though, on whether or not this is the right thing to do if we don't just allow these people to be involved.

I will continue to support them. I will continue to defend my position that we not defer to people. When we have two hours, we should use them. We should be inclusive.

I hope the committee hears that these people want to be involved. I don't want you to hear the negative, because it's not negative. They're saying, hey, this is a great committee, and great things are done here, so please let me be a part of this. It's a positive. This glass is half full, not half empty.

These people want to make some important recommendations. They want to have some input. Please let them do it.

●(1625)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Glover.

We'll go to Mr. Clarke.

**Mr. Rob Clarke:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to see some inclusion here. It bothers me. Mr. Lemay has said that there has never been a vote before. That doesn't mean, necessarily, that there is going to be a vote, but we just want the opportunity if there ever has to be one. We'd just like to have a vote. We'd just like democracy.

We see other committees. This is a good working relationship, but we're seeing what's basically transpiring right now, and it's being railroaded where we don't have a voice or a say in the subcommittee. That bothers me. I'm not sure if we're in camera or out of camera right now—

**An hon. member:** We're not in camera.

**Mr. Rob Clarke:** —but to hear this and the position that Mr. Lemay, Ms. Crowder, and Ms. Neville have, that bothers me. When Mr. Lemay mentioned your position, about you being chair, your position is to be neutral. I don't think that's very fair. I don't think that's just, because it doesn't give us, really, a voice in the subcommittee when there has to be neutrality. We just want another hand if one side says black and the other says white. It doesn't matter; we can meet in the middle, but we could also agree to disagree.

We're now in the 21st century, and we're not progressing like other committees have been. We're going to be getting stagnant and staying in one place, and we're not progressing further down the line and keeping in touch with other committees. How do we progress? How do we get our voice across? We could be sitting here and it would be “point of order, point of order” every time, and then what work are we getting done? We could debate this. I could talk for an hour just on this very issue of debate.

Now, when I sit here and hear Mr. Lemay saying “let's go to a vote, let's go to a vote”, I don't think that's fair. I don't. I think that's rude, but that's my opinion. If it does come down to a vote, I will be very unhappy.

At points, in making this committee work in the spirit of our House leaders, I think decorum is important and to work together... I don't see this as an olive branch being provided right now. I think it's just another wall or barrier whereby we can't work together as parliamentarians. This committee does work, and just to get a vote... I don't see the issue of not allowing us to vote. If there has never been a vote, what's there to say that in the future there may not be a vote or necessarily have to be a vote...? But open dialogue, open communication, is the parliamentarian's way.

My personal opinion, and this is only mine, is that I'd like to have a say on what takes place in subcommittee, being the only first nation member here... I think we should have a say. Todd is aboriginal. I respect that as well, but I still think, being first nations, that I should have a say on what takes place in this committee, since we are supposed to be representing aboriginals as a whole. I don't feel I'm getting that voice across or being able to voice for my constituents, for Canadians from any province, what they have to say or the direction in which, as parliamentarians, we have to go.

• (1630)

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

Mr. Russell.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The subcommittee is a creature of the committee. By definition it is smaller—sub—and in some ways it is subservient to the main committee as well. It has certain rules and procedures that govern its work and the way it functions.

Never have the structure or the workings of the subcommittee interfered with the voice or the vote or the workings of the main committee, the standing committee as constituted. In fact, every report of the subcommittee comes back to the main committee, and in fact every member has an opportunity to debate it and to vote on it. That has been the experience for the last five years.

The subcommittee structure and its workings may have contributed to this committee functioning in such a collegial way and in fact moving forward with its work in a diligent manner.

I think all the arguments others are using to now change the subcommittee rules will have the opposite effect. In fact the structure we have has facilitated the voice. It has added to the voice of people at the subcommittee meeting. Our subcommittee structure allows every member around this table in the full committee setting to cast a vote about its reports and its workings.

People have brought up the issue of witnesses. Witnesses aren't determined solely by the subcommittee. The subcommittee may present a prospective list of witnesses. Then there are those who request to be witnesses. Then there are members around this committee who want to put witnesses on a list the whole committee reviews.

There has been nothing in the subcommittee's workings and nothing in the structure of the subcommittee as it now exists that has in any way prohibited someone's voice from being heard on a particular issue or their vote being cast at this committee level. Never has that happened.

To be quite clear, a number of members have served on this committee for two or three years or more and are now voicing concerns about the subcommittee. This is the first time I've heard such concerns that they are not being allowed to carry out parliamentary responsibilities or that their voices are not being heard. I can't recollect this being a part of the conversation before. There may have been a conversation around the parliamentary secretary position, but as Mr. Lemay pointed out, in fact it was opposition parties who wanted to have that voice at the subcommittee meeting to facilitate the work of this particular committee.

So if the structure works, if it's doing what it's supposed to do, I don't see any reason why it should change now.

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

I would just remind the committee that at the moment the question before us is really whether the committee wishes to charge the subcommittee on agenda and procedure with the responsibility of developing a draft work plan, with the intention that the draft work plan be reported back to the committee.

With that, we'll go to Mr. Dreeshen.

• (1635)

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Thank you.

To go back to what Mr. Russell was just saying, in my opinion, we already have the basic makeup of the subcommittee, as we've already discussed. If I don't hear an invitation to the rest of us to come and be part of it when that happens—and I understand what you mean by a subcommittee—it's as though people from either the government side or the opposition side are not being asked to participate. I guess that's really where I am right now. That's my position. Never before was that option available, and now we're discussing it. If that were possible, I would like to be able to contribute to that. That's my point. As I say, it was never given to us before, so if we are discussing it now, I think we should talk about it a little more.

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

Just as a point of history on this, my recollection is that in the last session—and typically the routine motions include empowering the use of a subcommittee on agenda and procedure—there was no discussion on it. It was part of the routine motions, and that's just the way the committee proceeded.

So thank you for pointing that out.

We'll go to Mr. Clarke, followed by Ms. Glover.

**Mr. Rob Clarke:** I think this is just, as Mr. Russell mentioned.... I'm a parliamentarian, and this is a learning curve for me, sitting on this committee.

I want to learn; don't get me wrong. As learning progresses, we expand our wings. Sometimes we want to take flight and try it, and see what happens. But to see this as the only committee....

Maybe the clerk can clarify this for me. Is this the only committee that doesn't have that opportunity to participate in subcommittees? I'd like some clarification there before we go to a vote.

**The Chair:** I can probably answer that question for you, Mr. Clarke. I alluded to it earlier. Each committee decides how it wishes to organize its business around the work plans. Some committees choose the subcommittee approach and others choose to put all of those discussions in the full committee.

I don't have a list of which ones choose to go either way, but I do know, having had some experience.... I have worked in committees that have done it either way. As we said earlier, it is entirely up to this committee how it chooses to do its work.

Is that okay? Okay.

Let's go to Ms. Glover, followed by Mr. Weston.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** I just want to be clear that I'm not suggesting we disband the subcommittee. I'm not suggesting that at all. What I have suggested here today is that we only defer to subcommittee when we as a group don't have the time to do the work at hand. And today we have lots of time to do the work at hand. That's all this discussion is about—today. Today let's get the work done instead of excusing everyone, because they want to take part.

I am in full agreement with the rest of you that a subcommittee is something that, absolutely, if we want to have a subcommittee, we can decide to do. It's our committee. But right now we have the time to discuss business. We have another hour. I'm suggesting that we do it as a group and defer to subcommittee only when we don't have time to do it as a group.

My second suggestion is that when we do go to subcommittee, we delete that part about not having a vote and just make it fair, that's all.

**The Chair:** All right. That's another question.

We'll go to Mr. Weston.

**Mr. John Weston:** Thank you.

I just think that because it's the first meeting of a reconstituted committee, probably the most important thing we have to discuss is what we will be discussing.

I know that when I fly back to the west coast Thursday night, I'm going to be asked by my wife and three kids, "So what are you doing on this new committee?" I'm going to say, "Well, I don't have a clue. It's all being decided by somebody else." My ten-year-old is going to ask me, "How come?", I'm going to say, "Well, that's just the way it is", and she's going to say, "Daddy, is that why you spend the time away from us the way you do?"

I would just say that I would rather be able to participate, on this occasion at least, in looking at what we're going to be occupying ourselves with for the next months to come.

That's why I would like to participate in the discussion.

• (1640)

**The Chair:** Okay. You have the question before you. Again, it is that the committee charge the subcommittee on agenda and procedure with the responsibility to develop a draft work plan for the committee's work plan for the fall and report back to the committee.

This actually flowed out of Mr. Russell's question. That's what we've been debating here. Would you like me to read the question again?

**An hon. member:** Yes, please.

**The Chair:** It is that the committee charge the subcommittee on agenda and procedure with the responsibility to develop a draft work plan for the fall session and report back to the main committee.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** We now have the motion proposed by Ms. Glover. That was specifically to the issue of the routine motions. I'll ask the clerk if we have a copy of the routine motions. Does anybody need a copy of the routine motions? We'll try to get you some and I'll go orally here if I can.

Currently the routine motions read as follows in the section for the subcommittee on agenda and procedure: "That the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be established and be composed of the chair, the two vice-chairs, a member of the opposition party, and the parliamentary secretary, who will not have a vote."

That's the way it currently reads. Essentially Ms. Glover's motion was to remove the last clause or phrase coming after the comma, which reads, "who will not have a vote".

Ms. Glover, did you want to speak to that motion again? Then we'll consider the question before us.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** It is with great disappointment that I'm going to speak on it, because I truly feel that the member sitting to my right ought to be allowed to participate.

Being that they've been excluded by the members of the opposition parties, at the very least I would think that the government has a say in the subcommittee. If in fact the government doesn't have a say in the subcommittee, then this committee is made up of three people and the chair, who is to remain neutral, and that is not my idea of democracy. That is not my idea of committees that are fair and balanced and willing to work together.

So I would hope that everyone here supports this motion, at the very least so that the subcommittee is fair and balanced and allows everyone the same vote. That's all I have to say.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Are there other interventions on the question?

**An hon. member:** Vote.

(Motion negatived)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, members.

Now we will proceed to Monsieur Lemay.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** I move that the meeting be adjourned and that the subcommittee meet right away. That is my motion and it is not debatable.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay. We have a motion.... Correct. I was just about to say that. Monsieur Lemay has proposed a motion to adjourn. It is not a debatable motion.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The motion is carried. This meeting is hereby adjourned.

As we informed you, we sent notice of a subcommittee meeting to continue on in the time remaining for this meeting. We will ask the subcommittee members to hang back and we'll consider the work plan.

Thank you.

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