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Chair

Mr. Lee Richardson

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• (1545)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC)): We will begin. This is the 32nd meeting of the Standing Committee on International Trade.

Today we're pleased to welcome to our committee a parliamentary group for cooperation with Canada from the Republic of Macedonia.

We are going to have consecutive translation today; we weren't able to set up simultaneous translation.

I'd like to begin by introducing our guests. We will proceed, I would hope, with an opening comment from His Excellency, and then a general discussion of the committee.

First of all, we welcome Trajko Veljanoski, who is the President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.

He is accompanied by three members of the assembly: Mr. Andrej Petrov, Aleksandar Nikoloski, and Safet Neziri.

Helping us as well we have Svetlana Angjelovska, who is going to translate from Macedonian to English for us.

I am delighted that you are here. We will be interested in your comments. I understand you're visiting for about a week in Canada, mostly in this part of the world. Unfortunately, you were unable to attend in Calgary, but perhaps you will on a future visit.

This committee is comprised of members of all the parties in our Parliament. Our premier function, of course, is free trade agreements and the discussion of free trade, international trade with other countries around the world.

Currently on our agenda is a possible trade agreement with the European Union. Obviously we'll be interested in your comments on that just before we depart for a visit to Europe.

Our committee would very much like to hear from you. So at this point I would like to turn it over to His Excellency Trajko Veljanoski to give us an idea of the purpose of your visit and perhaps a little background on the current state of the union in Macedonia.

His Excellency Trajko Veljanoski (President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia) (Interpretation): Thank you.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude on my personal behalf and on behalf of the whole delegation that is visiting Canada.

My delegation and I are visiting Canada on an invitation of Speaker Milliken.

It is a pleasure to meet you today, and I look forward to meeting all of the committees that are on our agenda.

As you have said, I am accompanied by representatives of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. They are all members of the assembly, but they also belong to different political parties.

Our goal is to represent the Republic of Macedonia in its best condition.

We would like to express our appreciation that Canada has acknowledged us under our constitutional name. And we also express our appreciation for all the assistance that Canada has been providing to the Republic of Macedonia.

The Republic of Macedonia is a very small but significant country in the Balkans, and such a little Balkan region is very significant to overall Europe. I think this is a good opportunity to share the experience.

I would like to underline that the Republic of Macedonia is making many efforts to promote the economic cooperation between these two countries. The state institutions aim to create very beneficial economic conditions for investment, for promoting competitiveness in order to gain a functional market economy, and to create a very beneficial business climate in the Republic of Macedonia.

One of the key goals for the Republic of Macedonia for 2011 is to increase economic growth and to increase competitiveness. Other key goals include: an increase in the business climate and the creation of equal opportunities for economic growth and development; an increase in foreign and domestic investments; and implementation of active policies for employment.

All these policies will influence the knowledge and the qualifications of the labour market. This will include the provision of safe and quality energy, the usage of renewable sources of energy, and increasing energy efficiency.

• (1550)

The improvement of the business climate is through the process of simplification of the business procedures and also through the improvement of the dialogue with the business community. All of this is the focus of state policies, and all of these measures aim to create good economic growth.

The trade cooperation between the Republic of Macedonia and Canada is in accordance with the rules and principles of the World Trade Organization, in which our two countries are full-fledged members.

Our trade in the past three years has been increasing, but there is a constant deficit on the Macedonian side. The trade exchange has been increasing, but certainly the large trade deficit remains on the Macedonian side, and we do expect that these conditions will change in the future.

We consider that some of the reasons for this insufficient trade exchange, certainly in all forms of cooperation, are the geographic distance, the expenses for transport in the final price of the product, and the incompatible standardization of Macedonian products. But there are also other conditions.

In order to improve the present conditions, we are proposing to organize economic presentations and promotions of the Republic of Macedonia as an excellent destination for investments, and to organize visits of Canadian businessmen to the Republic of Macedonia, which certainly will be a good opportunity for direct cooperation and contact between Canada and the Macedonian business department.

We would like to focus in the future on bigger cooperation with Ontario, economically your most developed province, in which there is also the largest Macedonian community.

I would like to also underline that because of the measures we have taken, we did not feel the economic crisis to such a degree as other European countries. There were minuses and deficits in other states; it was a great minus. The Republic of Macedonia, in my words, was in a positive zero condition. If we consider the world economic crisis in other states, we may say that this positive zero is a result of the good work of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

• (1555)

As I have said, we are interested in not only political cooperation, but economic cooperation between the Republic of Macedonia and Canada. Believe me, we consider Canada to be a friendly country to us.

We may be a small country, but we are maintaining the momentum for accelerating the date for the opening of accession negotiations. When we become a member state of the European Union, Canada will have a true friend inside the European Union upon whom they can rely for trade policies and trade cooperation with the European Union.

We hope that the Republic of Macedonia will soon become a full-fledged member of NATO. You are aware that we have a dispute over a name issue with our southern neighbour, and that is the problem and the reason why we are not a member of NATO. I will not go into politics now, but it is true that our membership in NATO will provide greater security for the Balkan region.

At the same time, this will be a very good and strong signal for bigger companies to invest in the Republic of Macedonia. I hope that companies from Canada will be leaders in this investment.

That is all I have to say. My delegation and I are at your disposal for any questions and discussion you have for us, particularly to provide an impetus for the future cooperation in the area of economy between these two friendly countries. Economic cooperation is the best cooperation for the citizens of both countries. Greater economic cooperation brings together the citizens of both countries. Life is not imaginable without politics, but the economy is the provider of benefits for all citizens.

• (1600)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The committee has had a short briefing and was brought up to date on Macedonia in some respects, but that was very helpful.

You are to be congratulated on the progress in your economy since 1996, and on riding through the current world recession as well as you have. We share your thoughts that the current government is entirely responsible for progress through the recession. You may get different views as we go around the table.

Voices: Oh, oh!

H.E. Trajko Veljanoski (Interpretation): You are probably from the governing party.

Voices: Oh, oh!

H. E. Trajko Veljanoski (Interpretation): I too am a member of the governing party.

The Chair: The Macedonians are very perceptive.

We have the governing party at my right here, where they should be.

To varying degrees to the left, the further left we go, we have representatives of our Liberal Party, our Bloc Québécois, and our New Democratic Party.

We're going to begin questions today with the vice-chairman of this committee, from the Liberal Party, Mr. Cannis, who is a good Canadian. His name just sounds Greek.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): *Dobro*, Mr. Chairman.

Let me welcome you, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad our chair said "varying degrees to the left". That's very accurate.

Welcome to Canada. We're pleased that you're here. It gives us an opportunity to learn from each other.

It seems that your country, along with many other countries, has a problem, and that is the underground economy.

Because you are interested in signing a double taxation treaty with Canada, which is wonderful, I will say that this past June we voted to approve such a treaty with three countries, Turkey, Colombia, and Greece. Part of that legislation was addressing tax evasion and tax avoidance.

I am interested in what measures you are undertaking with your government to address this issue.

Should I ask my other questions, Mr. Chairman? I have just one more question.

•(1605)

The Chair: Sure, go ahead.

Mr. John Cannis: First of all, as a Canadian of Greek origin, I will tell you this. I've said this before, and what you said really pleased me, that cooperation in the economy will help make a better society and a much more secure society. I too believe that. I stressed that when I spoke on an issue that had to do with Greece and Turkey. I also spoke on an issue that had to do with Greece and Macedonia. I believe the challenge, sir, is how do we resolve this issue of the name, as you said, so that indeed... I firmly believe that NATO should be the direction for security, and so should the European Union be for you, because that will provide security, stability, and economic growth. And we then don't have to buy weapons; we can buy toys instead.

H.E. Trajko Veljanoski (Interpretation): I know one fact: when politics dominates, the economy has consequences. More politics means less economy in-between two states.

Regarding the first question on an agreement between the two states, we are working on double facilitation of taxation in both states. I believe that ratification of this agreement would provide a greater impetus for cooperation between the two states.

I would like to underline that fact that the Republic of Macedonia has very intensive cooperation on an economic level with Greece. There are many companies from Greece that have invested in the Republic of Macedonia. We do not mind this investment. We are pleased to see that a lot of investments are made in the Republic of Macedonia, because the citizens of any two states can only benefit from greater cooperation between them.

I mentioned before that we are very interested in accelerating the process of finding a solution to the name issue, in order to see the Republic of Macedonia as a member of both NATO and the European Union, and to focus ourselves on discussions and debates for improving and broadening economic cooperation. I can say that the citizens of the Balkan region are fed up with politics, conflicts, and riots. We have had a lot of conflict, and the citizens would like to see economic development and better prospects. I hope that we as politicians will provide this satisfaction for the citizens.

•(1610)

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we have a representative from our Bloc Québécois, who is also vice-chairman of this committee, Monsieur Laforest.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Welcome everyone.

I will be brief. However, I do want to point out to you that the Bloc Québécois only represents Quebecers in Canada's Parliament. It is a party that advocates independence for Quebec.

That said, the members of the Bloc Québécois serving on the Standing Committee on International Trade are of course working here in this forum to develop harmonious commercial ties between Canada and Macedonia and between Quebec and Macedonia. I believe this has always been so.

Besides, Quebec and its MPs are paying close attention to the growth of a fledgling country like Macedonia. This is important to us.

Mr. Chair, you mentioned earlier that you especially wanted to strengthen, or improve, commercial ties with Ontario. Everyone stands to benefit if commercial ties with certain regions of Canada, and with Ontario in particular, are maintained or improved. That's good, but there is nevertheless an important part...

I have looked at the figures on trade between Canada and Macedonia and I have noted that Quebec is an important part of this equation. Quebec also wants these commercial ties to be maintained. We are very supportive of your growth.

You talked about energy efficiency. Can you briefly describe to us your energy sources and tell us what improvements you would like to make to the system?

•(1615)

[*English*]

The Chair: I should have mentioned earlier, simply because of the time, that we have four questions and answers and a discussion. The normal nature of the committee is that we have witnesses appear and they respond to the questions of our members.

I just wanted to make it clear that's not necessarily the case today. It's a way of stimulating conversation, but I don't wish you to feel in any way obligated to answer questions you don't care to answer, or if there's not enough time to answer all of the questions, you can just pick the ones you want to answer.

H.E. Trajko Veljanoski (Interpretation): There is no problem. I am prepared to answer every kind of question.

I have mentioned the Province of Ontario with only one aim, that the major part of the Macedonian community is settled in an area of Ontario, the majority in Toronto. Certainly there are Macedonians who have had their homes in Montreal in the near past.

We are prepared to accept every investment that is coming from Canada, regardless of the province, and we are looking forward to every investment. We would like to ask you to provide an impetus for the investments from Quebec to the Republic of Macedonia. Certainly we will welcome every investment, and we do look forward to every future investment.

Regarding renewable resources, there are thermal centrals and there are also hydro centrals in the Republic of Macedonia. There is a big tender procedure going on at this moment for construction of the hydro centrals in the Republic of Macedonia. And if there is an interest, I would like to ask for your influence and impetus for investments from Canada in order to invest in this area of hydro central buildings.

I'm aware that there was a lot of interest from a big German company to invest in this area. In the Republic of Macedonia there are not many developed energy resources in order to export energy, but we do have resources for future development and construction of thermal centrals, hydro centrals, and other renewable resources. This is my serious offer towards Canada to compete in this tender procedure, because, believe me, the capacity from the construction in the near future of these hydro centrals will provide us the opportunity to export and to sell energy to other states in the region.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you.

I will ask now Mr. Julian to speak.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): I come from the Pacific coast of Canada, so my commute to come here is the furthest of all the members of the committee—about 5,000 kilometres.

In my community there is a small but important Macedonian community. We thank you for the links we have between Macedonia and Canada. The name of my community is Burnaby—New Westminster. Burnaby has about 100 different languages spoken within it. One is Macedonian.

I represent the New Democratic Party. We are a social democratic party, and in Europe we would be part of the caucus of the Party of European Socialists. We have 36 seats currently in the House of Commons.

I'm very happy to welcome you here with my colleagues.

I have two questions for you. The first is around your export diversification strategy. Your export is concentrated with four commercial partners: Germany, Greece, Italy, and Bulgaria. I'm wondering what strategies you have to broaden and diversify that export strategy.

We have a similar problem in Canada that is even more pronounced.

My second question is about travel to Canada. How did you find travelling to Canada? Was it difficult or easy to come to Canada, with your visa requirements and the process? I've certainly heard from my constituents that often travel to Canada is not as easy as it should be, given the links between our two countries.

It's a pleasure to have you here. Thank you very much.

• (1625)

H.E. Trajko Veljanoski (Interpretation): Thank you. I am pleased to hear there is a Macedonian community in your electoral district as well. There are Macedonian communities all over the world, and we are pleased that Macedonia is present all over the world. I would like to underline that the constitution of the Republic of Macedonia reads that the Republic of Macedonia is a social state, providing the social conditions for every citizen of the Republic of Macedonia.

Regarding the questions you have posed to me, we certainly are interested in welcoming major companies to the Republic of Macedonia, which will produce various goods in the Republic of

Macedonia, and we will export these goods to other states in the region.

There is equal taxation in the Republic of Macedonia, many taxation facilitations, free economic zones, and the will to welcome major companies. We are aware that the Republic of Macedonia is a small market, but it is located in the centre of the Balkans and in the centre of Europe. Thus we can export to all the states in Europe.

As you know, there is a visa regime between the Republic of Macedonia and Canada. Even people who hold diplomatic passports or official passports need a visa, and that is the reason for the slowdown and the less dynamic processing of visits from Canada. But I hope this visa regime will be changed in the near future, that there will be free travel for people with diplomatic and official passports, because it is also important for people from the business community to have an opportunity to travel freely. Certainly we would like to see visas abolished in the near future for the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia as well.

The Chair: Thank you. We're going to wrap up this side of it. I thank you for the time you've given us. This has been excellent.

We have one more round of questions, and that is from the Conservative side, from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Mr. Keddy.

• (1630)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to our delegation from Macedonia.

I would echo some of the comments from my colleague from the Liberal Party, Mr. Cannis, who I think stopped his comments at the discussion of cooperation in the area.

We appreciate some of the strategic issues facing Macedonia here in Canada, but I certainly would also encourage you to continue to pursue the opening of Macedonia for trade. In particular, we're in the process of signing a foreign investment promotion and protection agreement between Macedonia and Canada.

Finally, because we are tight for time, my question to you would be this. You have a small country, with a relatively small population, looking for business opportunities and economic growth—in your words, I think you said “development, investment, and employment”. We see more and more, along with development, investment, and employment, the importance of sustaining the economy—of being environmentally friendly and environmentally sensitive. You mentioned the potential you have for renewable resources.

I think I've confused your interpreter a bit there. My question specifically is about the opportunity for renewable resource development in Macedonia and its importance strategically in the area, specifically for export to your neighbours.

H.E. Trajko Veljanoski (Interpretation): As I have previously said, the Republic of Macedonia is a small country, but investment in the Republic of Macedonia should be seen on a regional level, because investment in the Republic of Macedonia means easier access to further investments in the region.

There is a very low-priced labour market in the Republic of Macedonia. There is great potential regarding tax facilitation, flat taxes, a free economic zone in which we expect major companies to invest. We have ratified agreements with most of these states prior to the recession and the economic crisis. Unfortunately, these grand companies were influenced by the economic crisis; thus they postponed but have not abolished their investments in the Republic of Macedonia.

Regarding renewable resources, as I have mentioned before, there are a lot of types of energy that can be produced in the Republic of Macedonia, even though the Republic of Macedonia is a small state. On the other hand, the region and the neighbouring states are hungry for energy.

Besides the thermal and hydro energy centrals that are present in the Republic of Macedonia, in the recent past we have been paying great attention to the sun as a renewable resource in the Republic of Macedonia. This is a potential area of finance for providing energy from the sun in the Republic of Macedonia. The major part of the year is sunny in the Republic of Macedonia; thus we can produce a great amount of solar energy in our country.

So far, unfortunately, we have not found gas or oil. If we discover gas or oil, we will benefit from it. Even though some explorations have said there is a lot of oil in the Republic of Macedonia, we have not proven these explorations yet.

Thank you.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Keddy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate your visit with us today in this rather informal exchange, but one that was helpful nonetheless.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Before we go on to other business, we're going to take about a two-minute break so that our committee members can bid you adieu and wish you well on your visit in Canada.

Thank you again.

H.E. Trajko Veljanoski (Interpretation): I would like to personally express gratitude on my behalf and on behalf of my delegation. Believe me, it was my sincere pleasure to answer all your questions, and it will be my personal pleasure if this meeting provides a much bigger number of investments of major companies from Canada. I would like to sincerely thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

• _____ (Pause) _____

• (1640)

The Chair: Okay, we're back at it.

I'm sorry, we're going to be a bit rushed here. We have a bill to get through, and we also have another amendment for our trip to go through.

Those in favour? Good. Passed.

The amendments have all failed. Shall we agree to the title of the bill?

Oh, I'm sorry, you missed part of that. We've just passed the bill and all the amendments failed.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, first I'd like to say what an effective job you have done through this process on Canada-Jordan. This is I think a banner moment, because all of the witnesses certainly that we put forward either were present before the committee or declined to appear. That is a good model of cooperation that I certainly hope will continue in subsequent agreements.

The Chair: We will know in about 15 minutes whether or not we can have that level of cooperation continue.

Mr. Peter Julian: As a result of that, Mr. Chair, I wanted to suggest a method of procedure: that we give you the 10 minutes of work you need to do around the clause-by-clause, but that we consider them adopted on division as we go through, with the exception of the four amendments I'm going to offer, where I will provide a very brief background. If we do it that way, I would expect we'd have everything wrapped up by 5:30.

• (1645)

The Chair: I had hoped we could do it quicker than that.

I do have one other quick one, and that is back to our European Union visit. We have first a suggestion from Mr. Julian, and I've gone to the department and they are in accord, and that is they feel that even though the European Parliament is meeting in Strasbourg and we will have the benefit of meeting fellow parliamentarians in Strasbourg, there are sufficient ongoing officials in Brussels that we should also attend in Brussels. We can quickly make a change and do that by having one group go to Brussels and one group go to Strasbourg. So I think we can cover all those bases and not add significantly to the cost of the trip.

Essentially the change that would be made would be that group one, which had originally been going to London, Strasbourg, and Rome, would now go to London, Brussels, Rome. Group number two would remain with London, Strasbourg, and Budapest. That would be the only change.

We have also changed one member of the group, because I think you specifically wanted to go to Brussels, Mr. Julian. If that's the case, go into group one and we'll put Mr. Holder into group two.

That's it in a nutshell. If we can deal with this quickly, we'll just pass it right now. If not, we'll put it on for Wednesday.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I'd just like to offer that I think both groups should be in Strasbourg and the group that was going to Budapest should go to Brussels. The most important part of the trip for all of us will be Strasbourg/Brussels. That's where most of the European parliamentarians are, most of the ministries, most of the civil society groups. That's really where the action is.

I really haven't heard a convincing argument about Budapest. The group that is going to Rome has already been approved, but I would suggest that we continue with being together in London and Strasbourg, and rather than going to Budapest, our group go to Brussels.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Mr. Keddy.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: What are you basing your criteria on? Group one was already approved to go to Strasbourg and Rome. Most of us have some tentative plans, or at least thoughts on that, so wouldn't it be easier to take group two to Brussels and then Vienna, Budapest, Prague, wherever you're going in that second...?

The Chair: It wouldn't make any difference.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: But my question is, why are you moving group one versus group two?

An hon. member: I agree.

The Chair: It was first on the list.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Yes, but we've already been approved, and it's already been established that we'd go to Strasbourg and to Rome, so if you're changing your mind—

The Chair: Both of them have. There is no difference, Gerald—

Mr. Gerald Keddy: —that a group would go to Brussels—

The Chair: —other than your preference. There's no difference.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Excuse me, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Well, we're not going to argue about—

Mr. Gerald Keddy: —it's a legitimate question. Why would you move the group that's already been approved versus the group that hasn't?

The Chair: They've all been approved, Gerald.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: What's the basis of the move? Is it cheaper to fly from Strasbourg to wherever the second destination is? Is it cheaper to fly from Brussels? I'm asking the question.

The Chair: I'm sorry, what is the question you're asking? What difference does it possibly make?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: What are the criteria for moving group one?

The Chair: It just happened that one was ahead of two. It's no big deal.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: I didn't say it was. I'm asking what the criteria were and what the difference in cost was.

•(1650)

The Chair: The difference in the cost is really irrelevant in terms of the numbers. The only difference in cost is from splitting the group, and that means adding another translator, so it's about an additional \$5,000. It will go either way, whichever group goes.

Anyway, we don't have time to get into a long talk about this. We'll talk about it Wednesday.

Moving on, following the order of reference, we have Bill C-8, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

We're going to proceed pretty much as Mr. Julian suggested, with clause-by-clause consideration. So we'll proceed in the normal fashion. Rather than voting each time, I think we can collectively

just go on division, if that's agreeable to everyone else, as per Mr. Julian's suggestion. I'm getting nods around the table.

So let's proceed with clause-by-clause consideration.

Pursuant to Standing Order 75(1), consideration of clause 1 is postponed.

I think everybody is very familiar with the bill by now, so I'm just going to go through this rather quickly.

(Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to on division)

(On clause 7—*Purpose*)

The Chair: Now we'll go to clause 7, and we'll pause here and deal with Mr. Julian's amendment.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Very simply, Mr. Chair, under “Purpose”, where it says, “protect, enhance and enforce basic workers' rights”, this would add “including the right to collective bargaining”. So it would strengthen the purpose, in that clause of the agreement.

As you recall, Mr. Chair, a lot of witnesses talked about the labour rights component, including the fact that temporary foreign workers do not have full collective bargaining rights. That's why I'm offering this amendment.

The Chair: Thank you.

I think it's pretty clear. Does everyone have the amendments? Have you had an opportunity to look at them?

Mr. Julian's proposal would be to amend clause 7 by simply inserting, “the right to collective bargaining” in the labour agreement.

Is there further discussion?

(Amendment negated)

(Clauses 7 to 9 inclusive agreed to on division)

(On clause 10—*Canadian representative on Joint Commission*)

The Chair: Moving to clause 10, we have another proposed amendment, this time from Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This provides that with regard to the joint commission, “the Minister shall consult on a regular basis with representatives of Canadian trade unions”.

Again, as I mentioned, Mr. Chair, concerns about labour rights, and the conditions particularly under which temporary foreign workers live in Jordan, have been raised. This would ensure consultation with the Canadian labour movement. That's why I offer this amendment, hopefully to unanimous support.

The Chair: No doubt.

Is there any further discussion on the amendment?

(Amendment negated)

(Clauses 10 and 11 agreed to on division)

(On clause 12—*Powers of Minister*)

The Chair: We have another amendment here. This one is from Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'll read this one out, Mr. Chair.

It would add a new component. It reads:

(1.1) The Minister shall

(a) consult with independent experts on human rights and independent human rights organizations in order to assess the impact of the implementation of the Agreement on human rights in Canada and in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; and

(b) within 60 days after this Act comes into force, cause to be laid before each House of Parliament a report on that assessment that includes the findings and recommendations of those experts and organizations or, if that House is not then sitting, on any of the first five days next thereafter that that House is sitting.

Mr. Chair, for this clause, this is an independent human rights assessment that takes place in conjunction with the putting into place of the act. As you'll recall, Mr. Chair, we've had previous testimony from human rights organizations across the country. They all support the idea of independent human rights assessments for these free trade agreements. So I think I'm speaking with the weight of the human rights community in Canada in saying that this is the kind of thing they would certainly want to see in the agreement.

• (1655)

The Chair: Do I take it that they would be the ones that they wish consulted?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, we're talking about independent human rights experts and organizations.

The Chair: That's a wonderful clarification.

Mr. Peter Julian: That's a very important question, but the ones who have come before committee haven't been suggesting themselves. The previous clerk would be aware of this from a previous trade agreement that shall remain nameless. There was a wide variety of very specific recommendations about how that human rights assessment could occur.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there comments or further discussion on the third amendment?

(Amendment negated)

(Clause 12 agreed to on division)

(Clauses 13 to 41 inclusive agreed to on division)

The Chair: Okay. We have one more, a new clause, which would be clause 41.1, as proposed in amendment NDP-4.

Mr. Julian, would you like to discuss that for a moment?

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

This would make the agreement renewable and would trigger a three-hour debate in Parliament once a year, so that we could evaluate the impacts on our own exports but also on labour and human rights. The renewable aspect of the agreement is something that has also been suggested by many of the witnesses we've had—not on this agreement but on previous agreements—to ensure that Canada's trade policy is really in conjunction with Canadian values

and is doing what it sets out to do when these agreements are brought to committee.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you.

It is moved by Mr. Julian that:

The provisions of this Act cease to apply one year after this Act comes into force unless, before the expiration of that period, their application is extended by a resolution passed by both Houses of Parliament.

Is there any further discussion?

(Amendment negated)

Mr. Peter Julian: Can I have a count on that, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: I think it might be easiest to say unanimous less one.

(Clauses 42 and 43 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Now we'll go to the schedule. I think everyone is very familiar with the schedule, right down to the tariffs.

(Schedule agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall the short title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Shall I report the bill to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Thank you, folks.

We have a comment from the Liberal critic.

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to thank the member from the New Democratic Party for acknowledging that in certain circumstances it is in fact easier to move through a large portion of something rather quickly. I want to express my appreciation; when that was an opportune thing to do, you did so today. Much appreciated.

The Chair: Mr. Cannis.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Chairman, I don't want our good friend, Mr. Julian, to think we're voting in the pattern that we are because we have anything personal against him. On the contrary, we just want to make sure all these trade deals have some consistency.

An hon. member: Speak for yourself.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Cannis.

Do we have anything else pressing?

We have passed out these budgets. I think it's going to take too long today, and we've had such a grand day.

I'll hear Mr. Julian, but other than that, we'll deal with the budgets for Europe and any possible changes, including Brussels.

Now, maybe I could just suggest that we kind of went at this ad hoc, and we may be opening up a can of worms in terms of who goes where—who's on committee one, who's on committee two. If you have a strong preference for one or the other, might I ask that you contact my office, send me an e-mail, anything, and just say where you'd like to go. If you're happy with the one you're on, or if you'd like to change, we'll see if we can work something out so that everybody's happy.

It looks like we're going to do two trips. Those two trips are going to be half the committee going to London-Brussels-Rome, and the other half will go London-Strasbourg-Budapest. Take your pick and let me know. Hopefully, we'll have six on each side who are happy with that disposition. We need to have that for Wednesday.

That's all for that topic.

I'll hear from Mr. Julian. It's been a good day, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: It has been, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to come back on that topic. Has the Liaison Committee approved both trips, as per this budget and this itinerary?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Peter Julian: No? Then I'll give you my preference. I'd like to continue to go to Strasbourg, but I strongly recommend that the Strasbourg trip go to Brussels, not to Budapest, if we still have the opportunity to change it. If that is not possible, then I'll continue with the London-Strasbourg-Budapest group.

I think the whole committee should be together in Strasbourg, and I think at least half of us should go to Brussels.

• (1705)

The Chair: Well, what the heck, we have some time now. Do you want to talk about that?

Mr. Julian is suggesting that we drop Budapest and have half the group go back to Brussels...or drop Rome, presumably—one or the other.

They've all been approved. All the budgets have been approved today, until we make these changes. We haven't approved going back to Brussels.

The two trips that have been approved now are as I described earlier: London-Strasbourg-Budapest and London-Strasbourg-Rome—half and half.

I don't know if we even need to bother going in camera at this point.

Go ahead, Mr. Trost.

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): I don't have any particularly strong feelings about where to travel; I just thought

one of the reasons we were going to do a smaller country was to get both the newer east European perspective and to see what people outside the loop of the inner circle are thinking. I do know that parliamentarians outside of Brussels-Strasbourg may have very different thoughts than the ones at the seat of the European Union.

That's why I was open, but I don't have particularly strong, strong feelings on it.

The Chair: Well, I think that was the point, to try to get a little more variety. We would get the view of the parliamentarians, and then we'd get to talk to some people outside of those areas as well. That's why we decided on one country in western Europe, and that would have been Italy, and one in eastern Europe, and that would have been Hungary—to get that variety. Another aspect was going to the U.K. and visiting London.

There was method to the madness, but I also see a benefit of going to Brussels to meet with officials, even though the members of the parliament will be in Strasbourg.

My sense is that we will have at least one, if not two meetings, when we get back, to share the views among the other committee members. Hopefully it would be as if we've all been to those places.

Mr. Allison, do you have a comment?

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To rephrase what you were saying, the suggestion that one of the groups goes to Brussels was because there are other groups and organizations that you feel we should be talking to there.

I think that was Mr. Keddy's question originally; I don't know if that was exactly it.

The Chair: Well, essentially the core bureaucracy of the EU is in Brussels all year round. The parliament moves for about six weeks, twice a year, to Strasbourg. That's a condition of it. The parliament happens to be meeting in Strasbourg at the time of our trip, so that's why we decided to go there.

We had originally spoken about the contact being not unlike our visit to Washington. We had some specific issues to discuss, and it made more sense to talk to elected people and our parliamentary colleagues in the other country, as opposed to just talking to bureaucrats. Not that there is anything wrong with talking to bureaucrats, being that we're not in camera.

Does anyone else have any comments?

Mr. Silva.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): I would say, Mr. Chair, that if the parliament is meeting in Strasbourg, I would actually get rid of Brussels. I've been to the European parliament on many occasions. When the parliament is meeting, the senior bureaucrats—pretty much all of them—move their staff to Strasbourg. They're not in Brussels. You're going to get junior people in Brussels, not senior people, during the time of the parliamentary meetings.

The Chair: That certainly has been my experience as well over the years. But then Mr. Julian raised this. I raised it with the department, and they seemed to be quite interested in us going to Brussels.

Mr. Julian, maybe you could elaborate on why you think we should go to Brussels.

Mr. Peter Julian: If what we're going to be doing is a consultation with parliamentarians, civil society organizations, and the folks in the European Commission who are involved in the trade negotiations, that's where everybody is. Between Strasbourg and Brussels we'll hit pretty well everybody we need to hit. I'm not inclined to think the same about Budapest as a place where we're going to have a rich—

• (1710)

The Chair: I don't want to get confused. The question here is Strasbourg or Brussels, or just go to.... The other ones aren't going to change. That's already been locked in, and we've all given good reasons for that being the case.

You wanted to go to Brussels instead of to Budapest. That isn't one of the considerations. It's either half the group goes to Brussels or not. At this point, we're so far along in the planning for the other places. We've already got the bureaucrats planning the trip to Rome and Budapest as well as Strasbourg and London. So it would mean adding only one. And it's very easy to add Brussels, because, as you say, all these commissions are there.

I take it your interest is in meeting with the civil society there. Was that your point?

Mr. Peter Julian: Parliamentarians and civil society—

The Chair: The parliamentarians will all be in Strasbourg. That was my point. And pretty much all the senior bureaucrats who you want to meet will be in Strasbourg too. There are some offices in Brussels that we will be in on an ongoing basis, but....

Ms. Findlay.

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay: I will just add that I would very much appreciate the reaction of whoever ends up in the second group not duplicating EU information but rather taking advantage of the opportunity to hear from people in a country that has relatively recently come from behind the Iron Curtain. Having lived in the Czech Republic for a year, I can tell you that the economics of those countries are quite different from those of England and Rome.

I actually think it would be really valuable for at least half of our group, given that we're all going to Strasbourg, to go to one of the former eastern European countries.

The Chair: Thanks.

Mr. Cannan, and Monsieur Laforest.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will just echo the previous speaker's comments and just leave the status quo.... If we want to have a democratic vote or a show of hands and keep it the way it is, keep—

The Chair: That certainly is a possibility as well, that we just don't change anything we have. We have the pedal to the metal. We

think we can get most things accomplished. If at a later point we want to set up a conference call with bureaucrats from Brussels, we could do that too. That's certainly another point of view—not bad. We just don't change anything. We just don't go to Brussels. Keep it simple.

Monsieur Laforest.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: I am all for maintaining the status quo. Each committee member is trying to determine which location to visit to derive maximum benefit. Initially, that is what we did also and it was determined that the best locations to visit were London, Strasbourg, because it is the seat of Parliament, Rome and Budapest. Again, I think this is a logical approach. Of course, there are some interesting things to see in Brussels and some parliamentarians to meet, but we had to make some choices. In my opinion, we made the right choices and we should stick with the status quo.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. I'm happy with that.

Do I get general consensus on that notion, that we stick to the status quo, with the groups as they previously have been laid out?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We tried, Mr. Julian, but there again—

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You've been very amenable.

The Chair: Okay. That's it then. That's all the business I have for today.

I'm still struggling a little bit with Wednesday. We're going to start Bill C-46 on Wednesday. That would be Panama. Get ready for Panama on Wednesday. It's the whole meeting, as long as you want to take the department.... We'll have a briefing and you can ask questions.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Will the briefing binder for Panama be available before Wednesday?

The Chair: It's in translation. I think we won't get it until Wednesday. I'm sorry. That's kind of unfortunate.

The meeting is at 3:30 p.m. We'll have the books for the meeting, at the latest, but I'm sorry that we didn't get them in advance. We can't distribute them until they're distributed to everybody at the same time. I'm sorry that we didn't get them here sooner.

That'll be it for Wednesday. Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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