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Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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EVIDENCE

Thursday, March 11, 2010

—
Chair

Mr. David Tilson

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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• (1535)

[English]

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

[Translation]

I see a quorum.

[English]

We can now proceed to the election of a chair. I'm ready to receive motions to that effect.

Mr. Bevilacqua.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): I'd like to nominate Mr. Tilson, based on his record—

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): And the silver fox hair?

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: —and the great contribution he always got from this side. I'm sure he'll be very mindful of that when he's chairing the committee.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Bevilacqua that Mr. Tilson be elected chair of the committee.

[Translation]

Are there any other motions?

[English]

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

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: Before asking Mr. Tilson to take the chair, I'm now prepared to receive motions for the post of first vice-chair of the committee.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

Mr. St-Cyr, you have the floor.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): I nominate Maurizio Bevilacqua.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. St-Cyr that Mr. Bevilacqua be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

[English]

Are there any other motions?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): For the sake of unanimity, it would be great if we could have a recorded vote for Mr. Bevilacqua.

The Clerk: I suppose that's fairly straightforward.

Madam Chafe, would you call the roll?

(Motion agreed to: yeas 12; nays 0)

The Clerk: There being 12 yeas and no nays—

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Well, ten yeas and two not-so-sures.

Mr. Andrew Chaplin: —I declare Mr. Bevilacqua the duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

We'll now proceed to the election of the second vice-chair of the committee,

[Translation]

who must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

[English]

Are there any motions?

Madam Wong.

Mrs. Alice Wong (Richmond, CPC): I nominate Mr. St-Cyr for the second vice-chair.

The Clerk: Are there any other motions to this effect?

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion adopted and Mr. St-Cyr duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Clerk: I'd now ask Mr. Tilson to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)): Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. It's a pleasure to be here again.

I thank you, Mr. Bevilacqua, for your words.

Welcome, Mr. Coderre. I'm looking forward to your experience and wisdom that you've had in the past. We're a pretty good group here. I'm sure you'll enjoy yourself.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have to decide what to do. Before you are routine motions. On Wednesday, March 3, 2010, the House of Commons adopted the following order:

That, for all standing committees, routine motions in effect at the time of prorogation of the previous session be deemed to have been adopted in the current session, provided that committees be empowered to alter or rescind such motions as they deem appropriate.

Accordingly, the routine motions that were in effect at the time of prorogation are reinstated. The clerk will reflect the House order in the minutes of this meeting. The committee can, if it chooses, amend any of these motions.

Finally, for information purposes, the clerk has distributed a copy of the motions to all committee members. Indeed, I think those motions are before you. If there are changes wished, please speak now. Otherwise we will move on.

Mr. Karygiannis.

• (1540)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Could you explain, sir, from the first page, the reduced quorum? Did we have that in the past?

The Chair: Yes, we've done that in this committee, actually, while I've been chair.

Is there anything else, ladies and gentlemen?

Okay. We'll move on.

We have to decide what to do, and I'm going to ask that the committee sit in camera to consider its future business.

Do we need a motion for that? I guess we do.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Is this for the subcommittee or the entire committee?

The Chair: It's everybody. Otherwise Tuesday will be dead time.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Normally it's the subcommittee, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: No, no, you're absolutely right, except then the committee has to approve it and we can end up having a problem on Tuesday, conceivably. I'm suggesting that the committee sit in camera to discuss future business.

You're absolutely right that normally it's the subcommittee, and I'm not moving away from that practice except on this occasion. Otherwise I'd be concerned that on Tuesday we may not do anything. That could happen.

Mr. Bevilacqua.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: Mr. Chair, I think the subcommittee will deal with that, unless there's an exception. For example, Tuesday, I understand, the minister may be coming?

The Chair: As I understand it, you're right that.... I assume that we all want to deal with estimates. The only time the minister is available is March 16.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: Perhaps I can suggest the following: that this committee obviously accept the minister's attendance for Tuesday, and that the subcommittee meet on Thursday.

The Chair: You know what? I have no problem with that.

We're starting to discuss business in an open session. If you want to do that, that's fine with me too.

If everybody agrees with that, Mr. Bevilacqua, I have no problem with that.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: Well, I would imagine that everybody wants to hear from the minister on Tuesday.

The Chair: Okay, we're into....

I have Mr. Dykstra first, then Mr. Karygiannis, and then Ms. Chow.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Congratulations, by the way, on being elected our chair again.

I do want to comment very quickly. I don't think we need to go in camera. I think what we are all agreeing to is that the minister will be here on Tuesday. Normally he is here for an hour to speak to estimates.

I don't know if I need to do this by way of a motion, but I would also suggest that the minister appear here on Tuesday to speak to estimates and respond to questions for the period of an hour, and that we use our Thursday time slot as the opportunity for the subcommittee to meet regarding agenda.

• (1545)

The Chair: I have several people now: Ms. Chow, Mr. Karygiannis, and then Monsieur St-Cyr.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Can I move a minor amendment?

The Chair: I don't think we have a main one yet. You can move anything.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Okay. My suggestion is that we would hear from the minister on Tuesday and that our subcommittee members meet on Tuesday after the minister's meeting for half an hour. I don't think it would take a long time.

So on Tuesday in the late afternoon we would come up with the plan, and then we'd deal with it on Thursday. That's my suggestion. Because if you have the subcommittee meeting on Thursday, then next Thursday's meeting would be missed by the entire committee.

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, first of all, congratulations on being elected chair.

I also congratulate the two vice-chairs.

I'd like to suggest that we do accept the minister coming here on Tuesday. I've put forward a motion that I think has been received. It has to do with Haiti. I just want the indulgence of the committee. Haiti is very much in our minds, as are the people from Haiti who are coming up to Canada. I would like to seek unanimous consent—or maybe I don't need to—to take that motion into consideration and have the subcommittee study it and put it in the plans somewhere.

We need to hear from the department about what is happening in Haiti, how they're dealing with Haiti, and what we need to do regarding Haiti. Since this is something that is of concern all of us and to the people down there, maybe this is something that we need to deal with first. The subcommittee can ask the department to come and give us information and can consider asking stakeholders to come. That could probably be the first item of business we do. I do know there's a motion. I'm not sure if the clerk received it on time, but maybe we can deal with that and send it to the subcommittee in order to have it plotted out, along with other business.

The Chair: Let's deal with Tuesday first.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I agree with you.

The Chair: Monsieur St-Cyr.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: I am not sure whether there is an official motion on the table. If not, so that we can move forward, I move that the meeting with the minister be held on Tuesday. On Thursday, the subcommittee could meet to plan the committee's business for the next few months. We could start with committee business on Tuesday, beginning with the adoption of the report. As we know, when the four parties agree in subcommittee, it is practically a given that the committee will adopt the subcommittee's report.

[*English*]

The Chair: Did I see your hand up, Mr. Coderre?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: It is a motion,

[*English*]

and I move it.

The Chair: Yes.

An hon. member: An amendment.

The Chair: Well, I think he has a motion and then we have an amendment and.... Let's just keep talking for a little bit and it will all come to light.

Mr. Coderre.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Chair, first I would like to congratulate you on your election, as well as our two vice-chairs.

I think we need to be practical. The minister will be here, and we accept that, but I do not think we need to wait until Thursday for the subcommittee to meet. That makes no sense. We have a reality right now called Haiti. I have worked with the minister. It is not a partisan issue. The fact remains that immigration is currently a reality. If we put off the subcommittee meeting to Thursday, it means that we will not be able to discuss the issue before Tuesday.

I do not see a problem in moving things along quickly. As Olivia said, we could take a half-hour after the meeting with the minister for members of the subcommittee to meet and start work right away. We can find a way to start working on the file on Thursday. It is a matter of compassion. I am not sure what is happening in your part of the country, but in mine, we are currently dealing with this reality. We

will ask the minister questions, that is for sure. I just want us to be able to work in a constructive manner. It is not partisanship; it is a priority and an urgent situation.

• (1550)

[*English*]

The Chair: We seem to have done this before. I guess one of the problems is time. I have House duty on Tuesday, but I guess you can get out of anything if you want to.

Okay. I sense the motion is that we hear the minister and his officials on Tuesday, and that at some time on Tuesday, immediately after that, we have—

Ms. Olivia Chow: A subcommittee.

The Chair: A subcommittee: everybody.

Ms. Olivia Chow: The steering committee.

The Chair: The steering committee: the critics and the parliamentary secretary.

For that idea, everybody in favour? Is everybody...?

Do you want to be formal and have a special...?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: No, no. I originally said that we should meet Thursday. I would like to sit down prior to our discussions with respect to our agenda.

I've asked to meet with Ms. Chow, I'd like to meet with Mr. Bevilacqua, and I wouldn't mind speaking with Thierry about what the agenda will be. I think it would give me a little bit more time to be able to do that if the steering committee met on Thursday versus meeting on Tuesday, after the minister is here.

An hon. member: That's right.

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Can I ask that we certainly look at the motion that I put forward, and when the committee meets, also they can put that into consideration?

The Chair: I mean, somewhere in my file here you've given us a bunch of motions. I assume we'll deal with those—

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I'm talking about Haiti.

The Chair: —and Ms. Chow, I'm told, has some motions. I haven't seen them. We'll deal with all those things.

You know, I'm trying to make this thing happen. It seems to me the decision is that after we've heard from the minister and officials, which will start at 3:30 and take us to.... So you want to stay into the evening...if that's what you want to do. We forget, but we're meeting late in the day now. If you want to do that, that's fine.

Or the other choice is—

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: Our vote's at 5:30, apparently.

Ms. Olivia Chow: You're a smart guy.

The Chair: Okay. We have to get....

Let's have a motion. The motion on the floor is that we hear the minister and his officials on Tuesday.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We're now on to how we're going to run this committee.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: My motion was attached. I know you separated them.

The Chair: I did.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: I understand that. My motion would stand that the steering committee would meet on Thursday and would plan the agenda for the next four to eight weeks, depending on how much we have on there and how we can move it forward.

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis, Mr. St-Cyr., and then Ms. Chow.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, can I ask that we move the motion on Haiti so that it makes it on the agenda? I think that's very important for all of us.

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis, I believe that would be one of several topics that the committee would look at. I mean, I know what you're trying to do, but I—

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, I don't think the subcommittee can deal with a motion unless the motion is moved and sent to the subcommittee for it to be dealt with. I think that's the tradition.

The Chair: All right.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I would like to read my motion and then have it sent for consideration and planning at the subcommittee.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: You're just asking for it to be referred to the subcommittee.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I'm just asking that we vote that it be sent to the subcommittee to consider it in order to be dealt with.

The Chair: Is that this thing here with five paragraphs in it? Is that the motion?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: No, it's the one on Haiti, number 5.

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis, I have a document that you have served on the clerk. There are five parts to it. Which parts of those are you suggesting?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I would like to have Haiti, sir.

The Chair: But Haiti is mentioned in two of them.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Fine. Can I take a look, please?

Can I read them into the record?

The Chair: Mr. Young.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): On a point of order, Chair, I thought we were going to go in camera. I would like to know what the agenda of the committee is. We're getting into a motion here when we don't even know what our agenda is.

• (1555)

The Chair: I tried that and failed. We're discussing business in open session, which is unusual, but the committee can do whatever it wants.

Mr. Terence Young: Okay, but why are we getting involved in a motion when we don't even know what our agenda is for the next three or four meetings?

The Chair: As I understand it, Mr. Karygiannis wants the subcommittee to take under consideration his motion or motions.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I'd like to read out two motions:

4. That this Committee review the fast-tracking of family class immigration applications from Haiti and call as witnesses officials of the Department of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and stakeholders; and, that pursuant to Standing Order 108(1), any findings and recommendations based thereon be reported to the House.

5. That, in the opinion of the Committee, the government should deport no one to Haiti until a safe environment exists there; that the Committee adopt this recommendation as a report to the House and that, pursuant to Standing order 108 (1), the Chair present it to the House.

The Chair: Can I ask whether everyone agrees that the subcommittee take Mr. Karygiannis's motion under consideration? Is there disagreement on that?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Yes, I did hear—

The Chair: I'm trying to keep this informal. If we're going to have to get formal, we're—

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Yes, I know, but we don't support the motion as it stands. I don't want to be unfair to Mr. Karygiannis and say yes, sure, we'll send it to the subcommittee. We're not supporting the motion as it is.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Which one? Motion 4 or 5?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: The one you just read.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: That's motion 5.

There are two parts to this. One is that we call for witnesses and the second is that we don't deport anybody. Which part don't you support?

The Chair: We are going to have to start to get formal here. I was trying to get some informality—

Mr. Rick Dykstra: All I'm saying is—

The Chair: Number one, you're going to have to address your comments through me.

Mr. Karygiannis has the floor.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: I thought I did.

The Chair: No. Mr. Karygiannis has the floor.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, the motions are pretty straightforward. We want to hear from the department. We want to hear from stakeholders on what they are facing.

The second motion is that we don't deport anybody to Haiti—unless they have a criminal record, if you want me to put that in there—because as far as deporting people to Haiti goes, they don't have a place to go. Traditionally, we don't deport anybody when areas are in turmoil. In Haiti right now, that is a foregone conclusion. It is in turmoil.

That's the motion I'm putting forward. I'm seeking consent to send it to the subcommittee in order for it to be considered.

The Chair: Okay, listen. First of all, I'm going to say on your motion that.... And I'm sorry, but I was trying to keep this informal and we can't. We're getting out of control. The motion on the floor from Mr. Dykstra is that the subcommittee meet on Thursday, and yours, which I assume is an amendment, is out of order.

You can bring in a motion after. We've voted on that. But what we are going to vote on now, what is before the committee now, is whether the subcommittee will or will not meet on Thursday.

Mr. St-Cyr and then Ms. Chow.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: I want to move an amendment to Mr. Dykstra's motion.

Instead of having the subcommittee meet Thursday, I suggest that we meet Tuesday, after the meeting with the minister, that we adjourn immediately afterwards, to let the members of the subcommittee meet informally immediately afterwards and put together an agenda. The agenda could be adopted in five minutes on Thursday. That would allow us to start our work on Thursday.

In short, the amendment consists of holding the subcommittee meeting Tuesday after the full committee meeting, instead of Thursday, and adjourning immediately afterwards so that the critics could meet informally to prepare Thursday's agenda.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's in order.

Ms. Chow.

Ms. Olivia Chow: I am 100% in support of that proposal.

The Chair: Good for you.

Mr. Coderre.

Hon. Denis Coderre: I just want a point of clarification.

First of all, is it in order if we are asking what we should suggest within the subcommittee? What Mr. Karygiannis was proposing was not to go for a motion. It was to ask if we could make sure—I'm just seeking advice here—to have those two things within the subcommittee.

The Chair: I take the view that once we've dealt with the motion and the amendment, someone could suggest that the subcommittee.... We already have a list, and Mr. Karygiannis has his list, which includes those two points. Ms. Chow has a list—

• (1600)

Hon. Denis Coderre: But a member of the subcommittee can provide his own.

The Chair: Yes, that's my interpretation.

Hon. Denis Coderre: So we don't have to discuss that, then. Okay.

Second, I'd like to understand this point. For the notice of motion, it is written that there should be 42 hours' notice. Is it 42 hours or 48 hours?

A voice: Forty-two.

Hon. Denis Coderre: It's 42 hours? What's the purpose of that?

The Chair: I don't know. We're different here.

Hon. Denis Coderre: That's immigration, right?

The Chair: Yes, we have our ways.

Are you finished, sir?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: It is a distinct society.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bevilacqua.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: Just so we're clear, we're going to have the minister here on Tuesday. The motions of both Mr. Karygiannis and Ms. Chow will be part and parcel—

The Chair: They'll be on the list to be discussed.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: They'll be on the list of all the other....

And it's important to remind everybody around the table that this is the opportunity—not now, but through your critic, or whatever, through you—to also put their items.

The Chair: Indeed.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: Right? And then we'll figure that out.

The Chair: So I assume that if there are any other topics, we will receive them.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: That's right.

The Chair: Or the clerk will receive them.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: Yes. So let's vote on the amendment.

The Chair: So does everyone understand the amendment?

Hon. Denis Coderre: Yes.

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: The amendment fails, Ms. Chow.

Now, what's the motion?

The Clerk: The motion is that the subcommittee on agenda and procedure meet Thursday, March 18.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Why does it fail?

The Chair: Well, because I counted—

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Chair, can we have a recorded vote, please?

The Chair: Well, we've already had it, Mr. Karygiannis. I'm sorry, the chair has ruled that the amendment fails.

I looked at the hands; I was very careful in counting.

Hon. Denis Coderre: A point of order: he voted in favour, and that makes six.

The Chair: I didn't see his hand up.

An hon. member: Well, I put it up.

The Chair: All right, let's vote again.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: And the motion as amended is....

The Clerk: The motion as amended is that the subcommittee on agenda and procedure meet Tuesday, March 16, following the minister.

The Chair: It seems to be redundant.

Does everyone understand that?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

An hon. member: Shall we adjourn?

The Chair: It appears we've had enough for today.

The Clerk: May I have a clarification, please?

The Chair: A clarification.

The Clerk: On which estimates is the minister to appear?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Supplementaries and mains.

Mr. Terence Young: It's the main estimates; it's right in our orders.

Ms. Olivia Chow: No, but it hasn't been presented in the House.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Well, then you should know, Clerk.

The Clerk: The supplementaries and mains have, but the report on plans and priorities has not yet. The part IIIs aren't there yet.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, if you look at my five motions, I think three have been passed from us before, and they're in the mix, so the only two motions are on Haiti.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Not now. Out of order.

An hon. member: We adjourn.

The Chair: I hope you've enjoyed your first day, Mr. Coderre.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Yes, it's fun. I'll come back.

The Chair: Yes.

That's it. Thank you very much. See you Tuesday.

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