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—
Chair

Mr. David Tilson

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• (1710)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)): We now are in public, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. Karygiannis, you have the floor on a point of privilege.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Chair, almost a month ago I wrote you a letter in regard to what transpired when the minister was last here in committee, on March 16.

I would like to read that letter for everybody here, as follows:

Dear Chair:

At the meeting of the Standing Committee of Citizenship and Immigration on March 16, 2010, I asked the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration a question with respect to updating the department web page, “Statistical information: Applications processed at Canadian visa offices, Skilled Worker applications received after February 26, 2008 (Federal)”. The Minister gave the Committee the following answer:

The information that you were requesting in terms of wait time under the ministerial instructions of the action plan for fast immigration were put on the web as a result of the announcement I just made, Mr. Karygiannis. If you have a BlackBerry, you can go to cic.gc.ca and you can download the information.

I pointed out to the Minister that I had gone to the website and downloaded a “hard copy” of the web page and that the information was not there.

The Minister replied:

It's in the information we just released as part of our first quarterly reports. It will be regularly updated every quarter.

I subsequently asked the Minister the following:

Minister, I'm going to give you a chance to rephrase, to make sure what you're saying...

Unfortunately, my question came in the last round and I was unable to further ask the Minister to correct his misleading information.

I have since gone to the web page in question “Statistical information: Applications processed at Canadian visa offices, Skilled Worker applications received after February 26, 2008 (Federal)” and downloaded the page a copy of which is attached to this letter. It remains unchanged.

I have also written to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration asking him to return to Committee to clarify his answers. A copy of this letter is also attached.

I am asking you to call the Minister to appear before Committee...to correct this misleading information.

Chair, I'm bringing this to your attention. The minister either did not have the correct information or... I wouldn't say that the minister wanted to intentionally mislead this committee, but I'm asking you, sir, to call the minister to explain. I feel that I have a point of privilege. I was not given the correct information.

As such, I'm asking you, sir, as the chair of the committee, to rule on that point of privilege that I'm bringing forward to you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Karygiannis.

I'm going to refer to O'Brien and Bosc, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. This is the first time I've done this, with this book, but here we go.

I'm going to refer you to page 1050, which talks about questions of privilege in committee. I'm going to quote from it, and then I'm going to make a ruling.

It reads:

The Chair of a committee does not have the power to rule on questions on privilege; only the Speaker has that power. If a Member wishes to raise a question of privilege during a committee meeting or an incident arises in connection with the committee's proceedings that may constitute a breach of privilege, the committee Chair allows the Member to explain the situation.

And I have done that.

The Chair then determines whether the question raised in fact relates to parliamentary privilege. If the Chair determines that the question does relate to parliamentary privilege, the committee may then consider presenting a report on the question to the House.

Then it outlines what the report should do.

Responding to that statement—namely, “The Chair then determines whether the question raised in fact relates to parliamentary privilege”—I will rule that it does not.

An hon. member: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Chow.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Chair, would you entertain the motion that upon completion of the wait times study, we study the visitors visa issue; however, if Bill C-11, the refugee reform bill arrives to committee, it would take precedence?

Do you want to entertain that, or do you want to have it back to the committee so that we could spend more time at the subcommittee and study...?

What would you prefer? I just think it's cleaner.

The Chair: I will allow the motion.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Okay.

I move, then, that upon completion of the wait times studies, the committee study the issue of visitor visas. However, if Bill C-11, the refugee reform bill, arrives to the committee, it should take precedence.

The Chair: I rule the motion is in order.

Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I have no problem supporting it.

I wanted to go back to—

The Chair: Any further debate?

All those in favour of that motion?

I see one hand, so the motion fails.

(Motion negatived)

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Chair, when we were not in camera, you had stated that—

The Chair: We're in a public session now.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Right.

But you had stated that I could take this to the House, if I wanted to?

The Chair: No, I just read—

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Actually, you're talking about issues that happen in camera now, so you should be careful.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Well, Chair, did I—

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis, I have made my ruling on the question of privilege: end of story.

Sorry, but—

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Are you encouraging me, sir, to take this to the House?

The Chair: I'm not saying anything. I've made my ruling to you. What you do in this world is your business.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): I move adjournment.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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