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Thursday, March 18, 2010

—
Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1205)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): Order.

I'm going to start with what we have agreed to, and then I'm going to continue with items on which there are some points of contention. I think we have made some progress, but we still have some work to do.

We were hoping to meet with Aurel Braun and Jacques Gauthier today. We gave them some ample notice—about a week. Once again, I think it's important that we nail down the witness list today so that we can get the information out.

It looks to me as though they'll be coming on March 23. We still have the UN high commissioner coming for the first hour, from 11 until 12 on March 25.

We're still waiting, but we had some information respecting April 1 about Payam Akhavan and Brad Farquhar and David Matas being able to come to speak to us on April 1. These are past as well as current board members.

So there has been some agreement concerning March 23 and April 1. Now what we're discussing is really the second half of March 25 and the first or second half of March 30, as we're hoping that Gérard Latulippe will be able to make it, pending his appointment. If he isn't able to, by all means we could have him later, as in the first part of April.

So there has been some consensus.

In what has been talked about now, there are some concerns around having Mr. Beauregard's widow be able to come, possibly on March 25. The other discussion was the possibility of staff and union members coming on the second half of March 30.

I'm going to open up the conversation and see where we go.

Mr. Patry is first, and then Mr. Abbott.

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): *Merci beaucoup, monsieur le président.*

I think your wrap-up was very good, no doubt about it. This is what we discussed in the steering committee, in essence. We all agree on the fact that Madame Trépanier... She had the reputation of her husband, you see.

An hon. member: No, no. [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Bernard Patry: No, I said I agreed with his wrap-up.

An hon. member: Don't let him heckle you.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Okay.

[*Translation*]

I will repeat in French, maybe you will understand better.

I strongly believe that we should welcome Ms. Trépanier on March 25, during the second hour of the meeting, because her husband's reputation was damaged, and I think that her appearing before the committee is very important. She was the one who asked to appear before the committee, and I believe that we should grant her request, her appearance being very important.

We think that on March 30 Mr. Latulippe, the newly appointed president, could talk to us about the future he foresees for Rights & Democracy. I believe that an hour will be quite enough time. During the second hour, we would like to hear briefly from employees that were thanked and from Ms. Lévesque, Rights & Democracy Union President.

On April 1, Messrs. Akhavan, Matas and Farquhar are scheduled to appear.

This is how we, the members of the opposition, including the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, would like to proceed. I have moved a motion, Mr. Chair, and I would like us to vote on it now.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

• (1210)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, you can't vote on a motion without debating it.

The Chair: No, he can put a motion forward. It's debatable, but he can still put a motion forward. We can debate the motion.

Mr. Bernard Patry: You could start the debate now. What's the problem?

The Chair: The motion is going to read...

I'm sorry, it's not that I'm—

Mr. Bernard Patry: No, no, it's okay.

The Chair: The essence of the motion is going to be that the widow of Mr. Beauregard come on March 25 and that the staff who were fired, as well as some of the union, come for one hour on March 30, either before or after Mr. Latulippe.

I believe that is the essence, Mr. Patry, of what you're suggesting.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Yes.

The Chair: So now we're going to go into debating this particular motion.

Currently I have Mr. Abbott, Mr. Rafferty, Mr. Obhrai, Mr. Van Kesteren on the list. I'm going to continue with that list.

Mr. Abbott.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Good. Thank you, Chair.

As I indicated in camera—I will say what I said in camera, but I will not say what anyone else said—the last time we met on this issue, the issue of speaking about Mr. Beauregard's widow is exceptionally difficult. I'm reticent to talk about the topic, except it must be spoken about, as she has asked to be able to appear.

In an e-mail I have that I believe came from her, she says:

Please note that I reserve the right to be accompanied by my attorney, Mr. Julius Grey, or his representative, whose service I have retained to represent me in case of any legal action taken against me.

I'm sure from her perspective this is a very reasonable request. It immediately raises the issue, though, which is, again, as I pointed out in our steering committee, what is the purpose of a parliamentary committee.

I think this is a very important principle. We take a look at the number of ministries where the government of the day, headed by the prime minister of the day, has his or her ministers, who take full responsibility for their respective ministries, and that then becomes a direct line back to this standing committee.

The purpose of a standing committee, of course, is to be able to call the minister, call the minister's representatives, take a look at the budgets of the respective ministries in great detail, ask questions, probe, and rightly so by our Canadian parliamentary system, built on the British parliamentary system. The standing committee has the opportunity, on behalf of the people of Canada, to hold the minister to account. It's interesting that although the committee has the right to hold the minister to account, it does not have the right to micromanage the ministry. It is the responsibility, at the end of the day, for the minister of that ministry to ensure that all the details are being taken care of.

Even there it's hard to believe that a minister would become involved in micromanaging his or her own ministry, so this standing committee, even in the direct line with a minister and a ministry, is at least two steps away from micromanaging the ministry.

Over the time I've had the privilege of being here in Ottawa, I've come to value the responsibilities that bureaucrats undertake on behalf of us Canadians. As I've had an opportunity, in particular in foreign affairs, to be outside Canada, I've come to deeply respect the expertise that the foreign ministry has on many issues. It's interesting that sometimes we, as parliamentarians, have a tendency to step into things we shouldn't be stepping into, and potentially upset international apple carts, much to the chagrin of the professional diplomats and their staff.

So we then leapfrog from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, through the deputy ministers, and then we're dealing with the ambassadors to respective countries and we're well down in the chain. Then we go into Tanzania or we go into Hong Kong or we go into Cambodia and make statements that may or may not be helpful. Assuming they're not helpful, then the bureaucracy has the responsibility to be able to clean them up. In other words, they are the professionals on the job who are charged with the responsibility, on behalf of the government but more importantly on behalf of the people of Canada, to carry those things out.

●(1215)

My monologue here is to try to make the point that within the British parliamentary system, within a democracy, there is a place for people in Canada, as citizens of Canada, with certain qualifications, to be able to go to the polls and vote for us to come to this place. That is the starting point of democracy. The Prime Minister, who obviously is the person with the most seats following that election, then forms the government. Again, that is democracy. But their interface with the bureaucracy, whichever bureaucracy they are, is one that must be held in the greatest respect.

I've been rather surprised, since we've had the privilege of being in government, to see the number of times when I have had a sense that the Prime Minister has wanted to go in direction A and it has been clear that the advice that his minister is giving him on a given issue is advising him it should be direction B. I'm also aware of the fact that there is a very valuable role for the Privy Council, which in turn represents the entire bureaucracy in Canada. It has a responsibility to advise its ministers and hence the Prime Minister.

So you have this very valuable and exceptionally important dynamic tension between the people who are elected by the electorate and the people who are actually charged with the responsibility of acting responsibly on behalf of the government and on behalf of the people of Canada who are not elected, who are not politically driven, and who are offering the best possible advice to the Prime Minister. Therefore, for any committee to step outside of that structure is to fundamentally imperil the structure of our basic democracy and the delivery of services and the representation of Canada.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Chair, I would like my honourable colleague to keep to the subject at hand.

We have already lost a lot of time. I do not doubt that his discussion topics would be very interesting, but we need to agree on how we are going to proceed. We all have many things to do before question period begins.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: I would agree with you. It's not very interesting, but he does have the floor.

Back to you, Mr. Abbott.

Hon. Jim Abbott: I will tell you where I'm going, and you can watch me get there.

The inclusion of Mr. Beauregard's widow as a witness, the inclusion of the unions, and the inclusion of the fired staff is, for this committee, to micromanage. That's where I'm going. I will now go back on that path.

As I mentioned, the difficulty is that we are quite frequently driven as politicians to be responding to the call of the day. We are sometimes driven by news media. We are certainly driven by public opinion. When we are driven by that public opinion, there are times when—simply because of the momentum caused by the news media and by the chatter in a Tim Hortons—that direction isn't necessarily in the best interest of whatever the issue may be.

You then come from the ministers and the ministries. You then take a further step to a crown corporation. Let's name the EDC. Actually, let's name the CBC.

In the case of crown corporations, of course, there still has to be some oversight and some accountability on behalf of the taxpayer and on behalf of the people of Canada by the Government of Canada. That very wisely is achieved by the power the Prime Minister and the cabinet have in selecting the directors and the presidents, the officers of those corporations.

In the case of the CBC, for example, where you have the Government of Canada actually taking upward of a billion dollars from the national treasury and giving it to the CBC for them to actually manage.... I must admit that when I was the heritage critic, I would say it was probably every 18 months that somebody, somewhere, on some issue, would actually start to try to micro-manage the CBC.

I recall one instance in particular when if it hadn't been so time-consuming, it might even have been a little bit humorous. It basically had to do with the programming of CBC Radio 1. We had many representations about four or five years ago—maybe it wasn't that long ago, but in that timeframe—when the new CBC management decided they were going to change the format of CBC Radio 1. Pardon me, it was CBC Radio 2. The reason why this was particularly significant to lovers of classical music was that up to that point the majority of the programming had been classical music.

It must be said that the CBC had made the decision that they were not only going to be playing classical music, they were in fact going to be producing classical music. So there was a following of Canadians—if I recall the numbers correctly, it was in the neighbourhood of 2%—who were following CBC Radio 2. When they were told that CBC Radio 2 was no longer going to be strictly a classical music station, there was a great tumult. There was a great exercise on the part of the listeners and certainly on the part of some of the members of the standing committee.

We ended up actually having closed-circuit television between Ottawa and Vancouver, and I can't recall the other locations where the other witnesses came from. It was really quite interesting to follow this, but it turned out to be, if I may say so, a little bit of a waste of time. The reason why I say it was a waste of time is because at the end of the day the CBC politely listened, and then the CBC politely went ahead and did what they were going to do in the first place.

• (1220)

In the meantime, what the committee had done, and this is instructive for this committee, was they had used up, if I recall, at least five committee meetings, at least five. We actually used up a fair amount of money in terms of the closed-circuit testimony. We ended up pontificating as a committee and doing whatever we thought was best. At the end of the day, the CBC politely went ahead and did what it was going to do anyway. Now, remember that the CBC, as with Rights and Democracy, is governed by people who are appointed by this Prime Minister and by the cabinet. So they ultimately at the end of the day are the people who directly answer to the subscribers, the viewers, the customers, the clientele of the CBC.

However, the attempt on the part of the standing committee in fact was rather vacuous, and of course that was the position that I and the other Conservative members took throughout the entire exercise. I don't think this committee wants to take vacuous steps with respect to Rights and Democracy or steps that will possibly be best handled in a court of law. The widow of Mr. Beauregard has access to courts of law and has access to all sorts of remedies. Certainly I'm not a lawyer, so I have no idea of how many, but I do know there would be remedies that would be available to her to be able to take care of her concerns.

I suggest that what would happen if she did come to this committee is there would be an awful lot of things that are extraneous to her basic fundamental requirements that would be handled, and would be handled in such a public way as perhaps to even be detrimental to her position.

I would like to have the opposition answer this question. If she did come to this committee and if she did make testimony, how would that advance her situation? If she did come to this committee and she did make testimony, how would that advance the ability of this committee to be able to change what regrettably has occurred? That's why I said at the outset of my comments here that I'm concerned about even raising this issue. I'm trying to raise it in as unemotional and as dispassionate a way as I possibly can. That said, the only thing that I can really visualize happening is that if she did come there would be an emotional reaction to a situation over which this committee has absolutely no control.

I've spoken about the CBC and it being an arm's-length organization. Let me speak about EDC, for example. EDC also is an arm's-length organization. They were given a tremendous amount of money, many billions of dollars, from the federal treasury from which they work. The interesting thing about EDC is that they have actually found themselves in a position in Canada of being a major supporter of our mining industry as well as obviously all of our export businesses.

With EDC we have seen with the testimony on Bill C-300 that if Bill C-300 were to go forward, EDC would actually be precluded from being able to carry out the kind of funding that they presently are doing on behalf of mining companies. This would represent a lack of funding support in the magnitude of about \$22 billion to \$23 billion, which were the figures from last year.

• (1225)

I can't imagine what that would do to the mining industry in Canada. They would be forced to make the decision on the basis of Bill C-300. Because what Bill C-300 actually calls for is that if things change, if there is a material change in the relationship the mining company has with the national government or with respect to the bureaucracy in the host nation, and there are questions that may arise, they would actually, according to my reading of Bill C-300, have to withdraw their tens of millions of dollars, or maybe hundreds of millions, from a given project.

That being the case, if they had to withdraw that money, the question on behalf of any prudent financial manager would be, "If I may have to withdraw this money because of something that may happen in the future"—

• (1230)

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Point of privilege, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: It's a point of order, not privilege.

Mr. John Rafferty: Pardon me.

Thank you very much, Mr. Abbott.

Mr. Abbott did ask me and the rest of the opposition a question. I would like to have the opportunity to answer it, Mr. Chair, so I would ask Mr. Abbott if he'd perhaps be a little briefer in his comments.

Then I'd have an opportunity to answer the question you've asked of me, Mr. Abbott.

An hon. member: That's not a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, I agree. That's not a point of order, but I'll also ask Mr. Abbott to maybe try to come back a little closer to what we're talking about. We'll draw the relevance—

Hon. Jim Abbott: I'm on the cusp of that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. We're all on the edge of our seats.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): You've been on that cusp for a long time.

Hon. Jim Abbott: I'm only 30 seconds away from that cusp.

The point I'm trying to make is that because of the unintended consequences of Bill C-300, the management decisions that the EDC, which is a crown corporation, would be forced to make, and their decisions on whether they are going to be releasing money, cannot be overridden by this committee. That's my 30 seconds.

The point is that you cannot have a committee micromanaging a minister or a ministry. That is not the way our parliamentary system works, nor should it. To take it a step further, you cannot have this standing committee micromanaging the EDC, the CBC, or Rights and Democracy. That is the essence of this thing.

The essence is that the opposition members in this committee—for raw political reasons, I suspect—have decided that because they have the numbers and can force the issue, they are going to force the government to hear certain witnesses at this committee. It is the position of the government that it is unparliamentary and it's really worse than just not being of value. It's a lot worse than not being of

value, because it breaks down what I've been speaking about for the last few minutes, which is the relationship of the government of the day to the committees of the day, to the respective ministries or the respective crown corporations.

If we want to talk about micromanagement, let's move from the widow of Mr. Beauregard to the unions. Obviously when the unions make whatever their testimony may be, these representations would be best suited to a labour-management negotiation, and they would not be best suited to an open public forum. Unions serve very valuable purposes, and I'm not speaking negatively about unions for a second. I'm simply saying that there is a time and there is a place for dialogue and for discussion, and that discussion, in my judgment, should not be in public, but behind closed doors. Once they arrive at a conclusion or fail to arrive at an accommodation, then that can go to the public to bring public pressure on whatever it is that union and management are going to do.

Basically I visualize that bringing the union here would have a result something like this: I see the union making a recommendation—any number of recommendations—outlining the way they would like to see the staff relations and the entire Rights and Democracy organization run. Simply because of numbers and because we're in this minority Parliament, a majority report would come out of this committee vis-à-vis Rights and Democracy that would then take up an awful lot of the issues that had been put forward by the union—to what value? The union can make those representations in private or in public now. What value is there in making their representations to this committee in this forum? I fail to see what value this committee is bringing to this situation.

I'm going to get to the staff in a second, but I want to step aside from this for a second to go back to something that I report that I said in another meeting of this committee. I pointed out that there are, I understand, upward of five million women in the world who, in maternity, end up losing their lives. I pointed out that upward of half a million children never see the fifth year of their lives.

• (1235)

I pointed out the number of difficulties there are in which Canada is involved, whether it be Haiti, whether it be Chile, any of these situations, the horror stories we get from Sudan, or our necessity as a sovereign nation to put on the international public record exactly where we are coming from with respect to the Arctic, for example. It just goes on and on, the number of things, should the committee choose to have these meetings in the extended manner being talked about and with the number of witnesses. The committee is basically walking away from the responsibility we have to those situations that I just suggested, and there are literally millions more.

I think any government that does not listen to committees, that does not listen to reasonable, responsible testimony and reports of committees, is shortchanging the people of Canada, and I say that as a member of the government of the day. Committees have an exceptionally important value in the democratic process and in the governing of this great nation.

The difficulty I am having—and it is an immense difficulty, and honestly, it is a sincere difficulty—is the fixation over Rights and Democracy. I am not suggesting that what has happened in terms of Rights and Democracy has not been vexatious and concerning. Of course it has. It would have to be, to any responsible and reasonable adult. But to be saying that those vexatious issues here in Canada with one institution in fact are more important than dealing with what Canada's position should be at the G-8 and the G-20, with the opportunity this committee has to offer that kind of advice and counsel to the government in public, if the government chooses not to take the advice coming from the committee, that becomes part of the political dialogue we have in Canada.

The government is asking for input from this committee on the G-8 and the G-20, but this committee, the opposition members, are choosing to fixate on one issue. I must admit that I find it very disappointing.

Coming back to the union, the relationship of the union as a public union is a very interesting one, one that I dare say very few people in this room could appreciate in terms of the nuance, all the intricacies of the relationship.

• (1240)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: That's a very good point.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Because we do not understand it, in fact, if we were really going to do something about it, perhaps instead of having three or four meetings on Rights and Democracy, maybe we should be having 10 or 12; or why don't we go out until June? Then the G-8 will be done and we won't have to worry about commenting on it.

With respect to the fired staff, the people who were involved in the difficult situations there were at Rights and Democracy, of which we are all aware, there can be no question that they will have a message they want to get out into the public domain. And because we live in a democracy, they have every right to do that. They can go to any newspaper. They can stand in front of a television camera. They can speak on radio. They can collect some money, perhaps from the union, and send out flyers. We live in a democracy where they have the right to communicate their concerns.

So again I ask the question, and I'll be looking forward to Mr. Rafferty's answer to the second question, which is—

Mr. John Rafferty: I look forward to giving it.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Good.

I asked the question, what is going to be accomplished by this committee that could not be accomplished by the staff speaking to a television camera? I don't understand why this committee would be taking time to listen to that.

I do understand that if we have professors who can come and can give fresh new information to us again in public, in this public domain, we could listen to their criticism of previous happenings and build from those criticisms to where we should be going, where Rights and Democracy should be going.

I can see certainly the committee carrying out its responsibility—and this is a responsibility—of questioning the new chair.

I'm sorry. Is it the chair or the president?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: He is the chair and the president.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Questioning the chair and the president, Mr. Latulippe, is the committee's responsibility. The committee's responsibility is to ask him the kinds of probing questions that will allow him to give the people of Canada an idea, a sense of the direction in which he wishes to go. We are not opposed to the directors who have been appointed by either the current or the previous government—past directors and present directors, and I believe we're talking about one of each—coming and giving their perspectives, because those people are appointed by the Government of Canada. You'll see that I have gone full circle back to where I started. What is this committee about? What is any standing committee about?

Any standing committee has a responsibility to the people of Canada to ask the tough questions of the deputy ministers and the assistant deputy ministers, because those are the bureaucrats who are appointed by the Prime Minister. We have every right to speak to the ministers and their respective chiefs of staff, because those are the people who are appointed by the Prime Minister. Those are the people who are responsible for carrying out the activities. Therefore, by having a past director—a retired director—and a new director come here, we would end up gaining a perspective from people who have been appointed by the government, hence our responsibility. We would have a picture of the past—and if there are some controversies, there's no question, they'll be brought to the floor—and a picture of the future as to where that director sees us going.

As I said, certainly having the president and chair come will give us—and therefore the people of Canada through the fact that these proceedings are broadcast—an opportunity to understand where that person, on behalf of the current government, sees Rights and Democracy going. So it seems to me, if we were to carry out our true singular responsibility to the people of Canada, we would have some recommendations from knowledgeable professionals as to where we should go. We will have testimony from people who were formerly directors and involved in the current poor situation. We will have people who will tell us where we are going to go. Most importantly, we will have a better idea of where Rights and Democracy would be going, because, clearly, the new president, once he's gazetted, will be able to explain to us what direction the government wants to go.

Because this is a political issue, clearly it is going to continue to bring press. I can easily visualize that after any of those testimonies the opposition, of course, will be trying to enhance all of the negative that undoubtedly will have occurred as a result of the testimony of the prior director. They will be trying to downplay or certainly pick apart the testimony of the new president and the new director, because that's what the political process in Canada is about, and that's fine. I've had the good fortune of being involved in it for a fair length of time, and I deeply respect it. But I say again to this committee, the difficulty is that if we end up going down this route, whether we're talking about the CBC example or the EDC example, we are basically wandering off course. We are completely off course as to what a parliamentary committee is about.

●(1245)

I must say, considering the number of senior members of the House who are on this committee, I'm a little bit surprised that they haven't arrived at the same conclusion that I have. The only thing I can possibly think is that perhaps there is an issue of politics here. I don't know, it's entirely possible that the opposition at this particular point has so few targets at which to aim because our government is doing such a phenomenal job. I read headline after headline about how wonderfully we are doing in the world.

I should say these are not at all from what we would call friendly media. I mean, they are critical media, as they should be. When I see the kind of headline that I saw in *The Globe and Mail* last Saturday morning—which is a responsible publication, but certainly no one would ever say that they are on the government's side—I can understand why the opposition is trying to find any old target to be able to take a shot at. I mean, that headline said it all. I mean, it was talking about the fact that our economy was leading the class in the world. Certainly our currency is going ahead in leaps and bounds. In Britain at this particular point, with its election coming up in May or June, it's interesting to note the amount of attention they're paying to our banking system.

I'm going to say something positive. I want to say something positive about my Liberal friends. I think it's probably a half-decent example of who we are as Canadians. Having been in business long before I was crazy enough to get into politics, I can recall I used to get really frustrated with the banks and the banking system. It used to drive me crazy because we were all so cautious. Then we took a look at the way investments were made in Canada, and all of the rules and regulations that surround us. I mean, crumbs, if you want to open an account with a bank in order to trade shares, they want to know every possible detail, like how many fillings you have in your mouth. It's amazing. That used to drive me crazy, right up to the point that I realized successive Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments, prior to our Conservative government, have paid a lot of attention to banks, banking, and investments. I think it says an awful lot about us as Canadians.

I give credit where credit is due to prior governments of all political stripes—whatever they were, I give credit where credit is due. Now we have the entire world looking at where we are. Based on the foundation that our government was given of a sound banking system, of sound regulations regarding the CMHC, all of those things, based on what we were given, we took and we enhanced them. I will boast about the fact that we enhanced them, but the point

is that we as Canadians have always had a very responsible attitude toward our banks and our security.

Now, I guess my point is that if I were in the opposition, I might be looking to try to fabricate some stories about Afghan detainee abuse, I might be trying to create more tumult over the Rights and Democracy issue, I might be trying to call down and implicate any number of people in ways that are not really beneficial to political dialogue. Regrettably, that is the conclusion I have to arrive at.

●(1250)

The Chair: Mr. Abbott, I'm just going to break in here for a second. I have a liaison meeting at one o'clock. It's clear we have another four people on the list. I'm going to suggest that the opposition and the government get together to talk about this, because we're not going to make any progress at all unless we come to some type of agreement on where we're at.

I'm going to set time aside on March 23 to discuss the list again, because we're in a motion that we're going to continue to debate. I can only encourage the opposition and the government to discuss the final list that they want to have.

We do have people booked for March 23, 25, 30, and April 1. As I say, I see this continuing to move on.

I'm going to adjourn the debate for today. I'm going to set some time aside on March 23, after the president and acting chair of the board speak, to continue to discuss this, but I don't see any headway coming unless there are some discussions.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Just a quick point of order, Chair.

As we know, when a member has the floor he or she has the floor. I'm presuming I will continue to have the floor when we get back to committee.

The Chair: Yes, you will. As I said, we've got the list here.

Just to let you know, Mr. Braun has confirmed. Mr. Gauthier is tentative, but we are pretty sure he can be here.

Hon. Bob Rae: He should be encouraged to be here.

The Chair: We started the conversation a week ago, trying to get them on the agenda.

Hon. Bob Rae: I'm reliably informed that he's in his office, so he's not out of the country.

The Chair: With that, the meeting is adjourned for today.

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