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Monday, February 14, 2011

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Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

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• (1540)

[English]

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

We are now in public session, and the floor is yours, Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Yes.

For the record, Mr. Chair, I wanted to bring forward this motion of privilege originally because of the Speaker's decision, which we just heard this past week. As you know, the decision by the Speaker had not been conclusive. He was conclusive in that he ruled on the question based on the evidence he had before him, which, as you know, if you read the decision—and I encourage everyone to read the decision—was based on the information that was provided to him in the House. He then essentially tasked this committee to follow up, and it was a matter of us following up on our responsibility.

The Speaker said that

The Speaker ensures that replies adhere to the dictates of order, decorum and parliamentary language. The Speaker, however, is not responsible for the quality or content of replies to questions.

He then went on to say, Chair, that

In most instances, when a point of order or a question of privilege has been raised in regard to a response to an oral question, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is a disagreement among members over the facts surrounding the issue. As such, these matters are more a question of debate and do not constitute a breach of the rules or of privilege.

However, he went on to say that the decision he rendered was based only on that back and forth—the question and the response to oral questions in the House.

He says later on in his decision that

The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader was not mistaken in his assertion that any and all statements made in committee, even when those have been repeated verbatim in the House, remain the business of the committee until such time as it elects to report them officially to the House.

So he was saying that I couldn't take the information that was rendered in this committee to look at his decision. He says that

If there are issues about the proceedings in the committee, it is incumbent upon the committee itself to deal with them and, should it deem necessary, to report to the House on the matter.

And for that reason, Chair, I think it's important.

It will be noted later on that he had concerns with the way the decision was made to de-fund Kairos, and I'll just repeat those. In

fact, my colleague from the Liberal Party already mentioned this in the House in his oral question today.

In his decision, the Speaker says:

Any reasonable person confronted with what appears to have transpired would necessarily be extremely concerned, if not shocked, and might well begin to doubt the integrity of certain decision-making processes. In particular, the senior CIDA officials concerned must be deeply disturbed by the doctored document they have been made to appear to have signed.

He then goes on to say:

However, despite the obvious frustration expressed by many of the members who have intervened in this case and the profoundly disturbing questions that evidently remain unanswered in view of these same members, the Chair is bound by very narrow parameters in situations such as this one. It may sound overly technical, but the reality is that when adjudicating cases of this kind, the Chair is obliged to reference material fully and properly before the House.

So that leads us, Chair, to where we are today, and that is our work.

As a member of this committee, I think it's incumbent on us to raise a question of privilege. And the question of privilege is the following: Did solely the minister reject Kairos's funding, or did someone else do it after she approved the funding in the first place?

We have just heard in the House that she has now said that she directed someone to put the word “not” into the document that was the basis for Kairos being denied funding.

Mr. Chair, I present to you some of the evidence from committee, where the minister, after being asked by members of this committee if she was the one who wrote “not”, said no, she wasn't, and that in fact she didn't know who did it.

As of today, in the House, the minister has stated—and it's in Hansard—that she did direct someone to write the word “not” into the document.

• (1545)

There's no other way to look at this, Chair, but that the minister lied to this committee, misled this committee, and that's an affront to our privileges. So in the finding from our committee, we would have the blues where she said she was not aware of who put in the word “not”, and also that today she has said in the House that she directed someone to put the word “not” into the document that was the basis for the Kairos funding being cut.

As a result, Mr. Chair, I think we have to report to the House that our privileges have been compromised and we bring this forward to the Speaker and follow up with the concerns he had about the evidence that he could look at to make a decision.

In light of what the minister has stated today, clearly we need to know more, obviously, and not just why she told us at committee that she in fact didn't know who wrote the word "not" into the document that led to Kairos losing its funding, but who that person is.

And why did she mislead us as honourable members?

For purposes of a report, I would cite the blues that our staff can put together from that committee meeting, where it is clear that the minister had ample opportunity to tell us clearly what happened—who wrote that word, and if it wasn't her, who she directed to write that word. And if we can have that in report form so we can send it to the House as a report, I think that would be helpful.

Finally, I think this is something that will require more than what the minister did today in saying now that—I guess because she was caught—she was sorry about what had happened. Our job is not to rule on that. It's to rule on what happened in this committee and our question of privilege.

I would like to have that report to the House with the blues of her testimony to this committee in which she stated that she was not aware of who wrote this word. Today she's saying that she had directed someone to write the word "not". Obviously that's a case of a scenario where we have been misled, and our privileges have been compromised.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dewar.

Just to review the list here, I have Mr. Rae, Mr. McKay, Mr. Obhrai, and Mr. Dorion.

Mr. Rae.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Just to make it very clear, there's no doubt in my mind that the minister's statement today in the House is not consistent with the answers to questions on December 9, 2010. I don't know how you square the two of them.

The transcript is here in front of me. When asked the question of "How did it get there?", she says, "I do not know". Again it was, "You don't know?", and "I do not know".

Something seems to have happened between December 9 and today to change her point of view of what happened. But this makes me very uncomfortable, because when we have ministers in front of us, we expect them to tell us the truth. I can only conclude that her answers simply aren't consistent with what she said today.

The second inconsistency is that the minister has constantly stated.... In French, she said on October 28:

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

"Après un examen rigoureux, les responsables ont décidé que la proposition de KAIROS ne respectait pas les normes gouvernementales."

[*English*]

The parliamentary secretary said:

The criteria for the funding for Kairos is the same as the criteria for funding... anyone else.... Kairos did not meet the criteria. It did not get the funding. There was no surprise there.

The reason I'm so badly troubled is that one of the conclusions you come to from this document and the change in it is that the effect of the document is to make it look as if the senior officials of CIDA were in agreement with the decision not to fund, but from the testimony we have from Madam Biggs and the minister, it's very clear that there was a very different process under way and that in fact there was a very clear recommendation from CIDA that it was entirely compatible with the priorities of CIDA, and the minister is stating for her own reasons that it was simply not going to be funded.

So I think we do have a question of privilege. I don't throw these things around lightly, but I really do think there's a problem here. I just don't think we can have a minister coming in front of the committee, giving us statements that are untrue, and giving us answers to questions that prove to be inconsistent with the facts, for which she now appears to be providing yet another explanation.

I'm not satisfied with that. I don't think we have any choice but to get it back to the House as a question of privilege and let the Speaker rule on it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rae.

Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Chair, I of course support Mr. Dewar's and Mr. Rae's comments and observations of motion. And I have to say that this motion was contemplated prior to the minister's comments today in the House. Frankly, we didn't anticipate the comments in the House. It was generated after the Speaker's ruling. The Speaker made his observations and his rulings based upon incomplete material. And it's within the powers of this committee to provide complete materials so that he can review it entirely.

Clearly, the minister's comments today seemed to be even more confusing than what she's been saying in the House or what she said before this committee. So just to review, when I asked, "...you were the one who wrote the 'not,'" the minister said, "I did not say I was the one who wrote the 'not'".

"Who did, then?"

Minister: "I do not know."

Me: "You don't know?"

"I do not know.... I know that the decision ultimately reflects the decision I would support."

It's a very curious statement, Chair, to say that she doesn't know who made the decision, she doesn't know how it got made, but it is a decision she would support regardless.

Then she gets into this distinction between the decision of the minister and the government. And apparently the president of CIDA didn't know what the policy of the government was, nor did the vice-president of CIDA know what the policy of the government was. The minister possibly also didn't know what the policy of the government was, because there's an argument to be made that she actually supported the decision in the first place. If you're not confused yet, Chair, I think the minister has some explaining to do. I hope that at some point or another the chair will invite her to try to explain herself before this committee.

Having said that, before us today is a point of privilege. I think that in any point of privilege the documentation should be before a Speaker, should always be before a Speaker, and that's what the Speaker said in his ruling, that technically he couldn't receive the material that was before the committee. So this motion does simply that. It's not commentary by any one of us. It's not commentary by the government members or the opposition members. It is simply putting the record that came before this committee before the Speaker, so that he can rule properly on a question of privilege.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McKay.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me just quote right from the beginning what the minister said today in the House that would indicate the issue at hand. She said, "I would, Mr. Speaker, indicate to you that the way in which this case has been handled, including by myself, has been unfortunate."

She had already stated that about the way this case was handled, and she's taking full responsibility of the fact. Not only that, Mr. Chair, but even the parliamentary secretary—and at this time I want to welcome the new parliamentary secretary here, my friend from Kootenay—apologized to the House for the statements that he had made.

So Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of points here. First and foremost, it is important to recognize that when somebody does make a mistake and does this thing, the appropriate thing is to apologize and say this was unfortunate and overlooked and so she made an apology. Let me just read what she said: "If some were led to conclude that my language implied that the department and I were of one mind on this application, then I apologize."

The parliamentary secretary has apologized and now the minister has apologized. Now, having said that, I think this committee should take into cognizance the fact that an apology has been made and it should be taken in that context that she has accepted responsibility, as a minister should accept responsibility.

But having said that, a couple of questions were raised about the nature of funding to the organization Kairos and the way the document was doctored or CIDA officials were misled, which is not true.

The way it works.... And there are only a few people on the other side who were in government, but the others in the opposition.... The way it works is the department is right to make a recommendation, but the ultimate decision is the minister's to make, based on the government's priorities.

She made that decision. She has said that, and she now has made it very clear that the decision that she made was her decision and not the department's.

So it is a normal purview in running a government that this is a normal course of events. This is not something extraordinary or something that is not a normal state of the facts. The normal state of the facts is that the departments can make the recommendations on

whatever they do, but the ultimate authority in a democracy is the parliament, is the minister who is responsible, and that is what happened in this case.

Having recognized that, I do not think that the committee should waste its time in looking at whether the facts met the criteria or did not meet the criteria. Okay? That is not the issue, whether Kairos met the criteria of the department or what. The decision, even if it met the criteria, was ultimately the minister's decision, as is recognized in a parliamentary democracy, and she has made very clear in the House today that she was ultimately responsible.

So I think when we come along and start talking about whether Kairos did or did not meet the criteria does not make it come very clear from the decision that was made. From the statement that she made, she, as the minister responsible for development aid, made the decision of exactly what she wanted to say.

Now comes the issue of the question of "not". She said it quite clearly in a statement today in the House: it was unfortunate the way it was handled.

• (1600)

Mr. Bob Rae: Why would she say she didn't know?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: May I speak? You had your chance. I did not intervene. It's my chance, so I hope you will let me finish my way.

Thank you.

She has stated it quite clearly. The way it was handled was unfortunate, so one would have to look into it. She has apologized for that, and she has made it very clear; there is no ambiguity on the issue. She has made it very clear that what she said today was that the "not" was inserted at her direction.

The statement that was made today has laid out all the issues the opposition is now raising or trying to raise. As the Speaker said, these things are all addressed very clearly. So the minister has taken responsibility for the decision she made on whether it meets the criteria or not. This leaves out the CIDA people; whatever the department did is a different issue. She also said she herself did not handle it properly, and she has apologized for it.

Taking all these things into account, I think this matter does not need to go forward any more. It has now been very well sorted out, and I think that should be the basis for us to carry on, for the opposition to carry on, and turn this thing aside. The fact is it is a partisan thing, and they're picking at the nitty-gritty. On a larger scale, I think we should now move forward and accept her apology and the parliamentary secretary's apology. The matter is now very clear, Mr. Chair, and I think we should move on now.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Dorion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Chair, I feel that the long analysis we have just heard of whether or not the minister regrets the way in which the matter was handled has absolutely no relevance to what we are discussing at the moment. We are considering the minister's statement that she instructed someone to add the now-famous word "not". This statement, her most recent, completely contradicts the one she made here before the committee. I do not see how a person can state that she did not know who did it and then later state that she instructed someone to do it. It seems impossible to me to reconcile those two versions of the events.

One of the two statements is misleading, therefore. That it what we have to talk about. One of the privileges of this committee has been breached, namely that witnesses will tell us the truth, all the more so when they are ministers.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dorion.

Mr. Pearson, and then Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I'm troubled by this. I think there are a couple of things, and I'm just speaking my own mind.

The issue of the "not" is not something I'm preoccupied with. What I am... When the Speaker said this must have presented a stinging rebuke to CIDA officials, having to go through this, the Speaker was concerned about the effect this was also having on the ministry. I think that's a valid case.

I think we have a case here in which a decision was made—and I understand the government has the right to make its decisions—but when it really got hot and it got difficult and many of us were asking those questions, at that particular point the responsibility was placed on the ministry, that the ministry had made this decision. I think that's a very serious thing. CIDA is a ministry, and its people signed off on it and thought that Kairos should go ahead. Kairos themselves said they had been encouraged by CIDA to do that.

So my concern is much more not just what the minister said or apologized for, but we have to be very careful when we decide not to take the responsibility when this comes out and suddenly let CIDA bear the brunt of what's going on. I don't think that's right. I don't think any minister should let the department take the hit for something they've made the decision on.

So that's why I think the matter of privilege matters. I think CIDA matters. It matters to all of us—that's part of the reason we're on this committee: that CIDA was left to carry the load, even until today, until finally the minister expanded on that a little more. I think that was part of the Speaker's comments—the effect on the ministry—and I think as the committee that's in charge of that, we have to take it seriously.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pearson.

Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Actually, I was just trying to get to the end of the privilege matter. I wanted to verify with the clerk that we are

clear on what we're reporting to the House. This goes back to the December 19 meeting. I'm asking that this be put forward in the report as evidence, because that's when the minister was here. We should include that our privileges as members have been compromised and that we've been misled by the minister's evidence at committee on December 19. This would be for our staff to put in a report.

A voice: The ninth.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Sorry, it is December 9, when the minister was in front of our committee. Thank you.

And this should be reported to the House. Essentially, it is a straightforward ask that the Speaker look at this as a case of privilege. He'll have the other evidence, and that is the evidence that was provided by the minister herself. I wanted to clarify that.

Finally, I have to say that when the parliamentary secretary stood on his feet and acknowledged that he had made a mistake, I got on my feet and acknowledged that he had taken responsibility for his words. The difference here is that we had a minister who decided not to take responsibility.

The comments made today in the House really do not matter. I'm glad she decided to deal with it, pardon the pun, but she did mislead us. And we can't have that. We have a document that suggests a group is going to receive funding, a group that's been in the field for decades, doing good work. It gets before a minister, and one word is put in there. She won't tell us who put the word in, and she won't tell us how the word was inserted. She tells this to this committee. Our job is to hold government to account and to oversee the file. Clearly, this is an abuse of our privileges. If anyone comes before us and says one thing here and then says the exact opposite somewhere else, there's a problem with our privileges being compromised.

Mr. Clerk, this is what I'm asking for: that this be reported to the House; and that the December 9 blues of the testimony of the minister at committee be sent to the Speaker. It's a straightforward case where we've asked that the Speaker rule on that report. I think he will find—but I'll leave it to him—that our privileges were compromised. And I'll leave it with you.

• (1605)

The Chair: Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: As reluctant as I am to enter into debate with Mr. Obhrai, because that would be unfair, he seems to argue that the minister feels that the way it was handled was unfortunate, that she takes full responsibility, and that she's apologizing. Therefore, she apologizes for the way it has been handled, not the decision itself.

It appears to be, in my judgment, a consequence-free apology. It's quite regrettable. I rather wish she had taken the same position and made the same statement as that of the parliamentary secretary. When he was misled by the documentation, he stood in the House and said he misled the House and apologized for it. I wish the minister had ascended to the same level of responsibility.

But in other respects, I think Mr. Dewar's motion is right on. I don't know whether there are any other debaters, but I'd be interested in going to the question.

The Chair: Is there no more debate?

I'll call the question on whether we believe there's been a question of privilege that's been breached here in committee.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I have a point of order. May I know what the clerk was telling you, procedurally speaking? Is this the right thing to do? You were in a big conversation when I was talking, and you were not giving any attention to me. So I presume you were checking on the process.

The Chair: I'm not sure you want to know the answer. Never ask a question you don't know the answer to already.

The clerk has instructed me that it is my decision on whether it is a question of privilege or not among our committee. Once that decision is made, you all know you can overrule me. As I count the bodies very quickly in the room, I don't think we're going to win that vote. It's a question of whether we can go right to that and have a vote, or whether we will look at that.

The clerk also indicated to me that there's probably some merit here, and we could probably put this forward to the House. Once we have the question we'll still have to figure out what would go into the report. We will need to have some conversations on that.

So I'm going to put to the committee whether we think we have a question of privilege here. We'll hold that vote and then move forward to determine what that report may look like.

I will ask who thinks there was a breach of privilege—okay—and all those opposed.

All right, so it's carried.

Please give me one second here.

•(1610) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1610)

The Chair: Thank you for bearing with me. It's great in Parliament that we learn something new every day.

I'm going to suggest that the researchers and the clerk put something together for us to look at on Wednesday. We have to submit a report to the House. That has to be put together in a certain way. Then I suggest we come back on Wednesday and have a discussion on what should be in the report. They're not going to take any sides; they will merely report the facts on what was said or wasn't said, etc. My suggestion is that we come back Wednesday and set aside two hours to go through the report.

An hon. member: And Mr. Braun gets put off to another day.

The Chair: He'll have to be put off until we come back after the break.

I'll take Mr. Obhrai and then Mr. McKay.

•(1615)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I would like to understand the process. The researchers would come with a report, right? Would the report have recommendations in it or not? It's just a report.

The Chair: No. What the researchers will do is basically outline, clearly describe the situation, summarize the events, name the individuals involved, indicate the privilege that may be involved or that a contempt may have occurred, and request the House to take

some action. So it is their job only to lay out the facts as they see them, not to make recommendations, not to....

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: How does our argument that I've just made go into the report?

The Chair: My thought would be that when the researchers come back with the facts on Wednesday, then that will be an issue of debate here in the committee. We have to adopt it. We have to adopt the report.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: My question is on a procedural basis. I'm asking the clerk.

There is the argument that the government has just made in reference to this question of privilege. How does that argument that I just made go into the report to say that this is what I meant?

The Chair: Probably as a supplementary, just like we put any report back to the House....

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Can we put in a supplementary report?

The Chair: I'm going to suggest that the researchers put together a report based on the history and based on the facts and that we spend two hours on Wednesday to look at it and determine what that report needs to look at to go back to the House.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'm not finished yet. It's just so I'm clear.

It's fine whatever they will do and what report will come and we'll have two hours of debate over here. The fact does not change that when this report is made, it should also be pointed out to the researchers that the statement that was made by the minister today should be part and parcel of it.

The Chair: We're only going to relate to the facts here in committee, to what was said here in committee.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Okay, but I have laid down my arguments, stated what the minister said in the House. How would that be formed as part of the report? Would that be formed as part of a minority report, a supplementary report, or what? I just want a direction from the clerk so that we can understand the process. What is the direction?

The Chair: I would think that would be part of it, and then an opportunity to speak to it in the House as well.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: But before I speak in the House, I want this argument to go forward, so that when the Speaker, at the end of the day, is making his ruling on all the facts that are there, he's also getting what we said in the committee and what I said in the committee.

The Chair: Sure. I would think a supplementary report would be included.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: So a supplementary report then would be attached to that.

Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Okay, I have Mr. McKay and then I have Mr. Dewar.

Hon. John McKay: This is a bit of an unusual procedure, and we're all finding our way around here, and as a fellow chair I have some sympathy for your position.

Having said that, the issue is getting the material to the Speaker. The only comment, in my view, that the committee makes is that there “may” have been a breach of privilege. That’s the material that we wish. The reason we do that is because you can’t rule on a breach of privilege. The chairs have no ability to rule on breaches of privilege. You can rule on other matters, but not on breaches of privilege. Therefore it’s the Speaker who has to rule.

So the only material that should be before the Speaker is the material he asked for, effectively, in his previous ruling and the material that has occurred before this committee. That’s all that we can actually say. I don’t believe we can write opinions, supplementary or otherwise. I’d be interested in a clarification from you and the clerk on that point, but I don’t think this is a matter of opinion. I don’t think this is a matter of report as we would normally write reports, paragraph this, paragraph that, we recommend la, la, la.

This is a very different report in its nature. It’s really a procedural question and it’s documentation where the committee simply asks a very simple question: have our privileges been breached? I think it’s that simple.

• (1620)

The Chair: Mr. Dewar and then Mr. Rae.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Well put. I was going to state similar points.

We’re not writing a report that we would typically do here. It’s simply submitting a point that a privilege has been compromised and asks that there be certain facets of statement of fact from what occurred at this committee to be included in that report and then have the Speaker rule. I really don’t think we need two hours, frankly, to look that over.

What I was asking for is to paraphrase what was discussed here at committee, certainly, but that we look to the facts as they were presented by the minister herself through the testimony on December 9. It’s fairly straightforward. We’re not making recommendations, as was mentioned. We’re putting forward, as we’ve okayed, the motion to have the privilege noted and sent to the Speaker.

I concur. I don’t think it would take two hours at all. In fact, we should give ourselves a limit of not more than 45 minutes to an hour to look that over.

The Chair: I appreciate the fact that you think it may not take more than an hour. I’ve been in this committee where we’ve changed “the” on reports that were based on the language of what the researchers wrote. So I think when it comes to an issue of privilege, you’re going to have a little bit more debate than one hour. I’ve just got a feeling.

The challenge is that when a report comes forward here, the committee would want to have a fulsome discussion on it. I don’t think we should limit ourselves. Quite frankly, committee members are able to speak as long as they’re on the list. We’re going to be debating the report until we send it to the House. I believe we should give adequate time for that.

Mr. Rae and then Mr. Harris.

Hon. Bob Rae: Very briefly, it seems to me that the report doesn’t have to be very long. It should focus principally on the statements that the minister made in response to questions from members in this

committee, as well as the supporting documents with respect to the addition of the word “not” and the document that has appeared in many newspapers now, and elsewhere. It clearly shows that something was changed.

I think there are some issues there around what was the net effect of that change. It made it look as if officials from CIDA agreed with a decision of the minister that they in fact did not agree with. The subsequent story.... I don’t know whether in fact you can do this or not, because you say you can only talk about what’s in the committee, but the other reality is that through a series of answers on the order paper, and in other ways, answers were given to the House that were misleading to the House. The net effect is that there are two or three cases where there is an issue with respect to the House having been misled.

I must say, just parenthetically, that I don’t think the minister’s statement today clears that up. There are apologies that clear the air and there are statements that don’t clear the air. I think the minister’s statement today fits into the second category.

The Chair: Mr. Harris.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Chair, with all due respect to my colleagues across the way, at the beginning of this conversation, regarding how the report was going to be, it was explained that it would be a report based on what occurred in the committee today. I understand that.

If that is to include things that were said by Mr. Rae, Mr. Pearson, Mr. McKay, Mr. Dorion, and Mr. Dewar, if any of their comments or recommendations or suggestions, or whatever, are to appear in that report, then I would suggest that you must also include all of the comments that were made by the minister today.

While there’s been a suggestion by Mr. Rae that this is some sort of a special report, the principles of the report are that if there are to be comments or recommendations from any of the members on the other side, then the report must include any comments that were made by the minister.

Hon. Bob Rae: It shouldn’t contain either.

• (1625)

The Chair: There will be no recommendations.

Hon. Bob Rae: It shouldn’t contain either, I agree with you. It should not contain any commentary.

The Chair: Okay, I have a list here. Mr. Lunney and then Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Chair, the point was raised that we probably could have a very quick meeting; we discuss what’s basically there and then put down the facts. I believe the Speaker has access to the blues of the committee meeting here. It’s recorded in Hansard. If we’re not going to be having a report that requires discussion, then he has access to the blues.

With all due respect, I think we are going to need to discuss the content of that report, and I think we’re going to need to take a look at the nature of that. There is some confusion about what form it will take, and I think we’re going to have to flesh that out as we look at it.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'm not going to say much, except that when the report comes through we can discuss this on Wednesday. I understand the opposition side wants to cut it somewhere and not get the complete picture, but our side wants to get the complete picture.

We can discuss this on Wednesday, when the report comes forward. I would suggest that we move forward and then go back in camera to discuss other committee business.

The Chair: Go ahead, Paul.

Mr. Paul Dewar: To be clear, because I'm concerned about where we're going with some of this, I brought up the question of privilege. We agreed it was a question of privilege, and we agreed we'd report it to the House. That's nice and clean and concise.

What we're now discussing is what that report will be, so let's not make it too big. We were talking about the question of privilege; we agreed it was. Now we're talking about what's going to be in that report, because we're getting into recommendations on what we're putting in. It's a very straightforward process.

The Chair: I also need some clarification. We've talked about some documents. The clerk has no documents to append.

Go ahead.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I requested, at a minimum, that we have the transcript from December 9. That's something I would ask to be included in the report.

The Chair: I know we can get the transcript. I'm not concerned about the blues.

Mr. Paul Dewar: You're talking about other documents.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Paul Dewar: As long as we're clear on the December 9 piece.

The Chair: No other documents?

Hon. Bob Rae: In order to make sense of the document, you have to have the actual document that has the word "not" in it.

The Chair: We don't have it.

Go ahead, Monsieur Dorion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion: Let me sum things up, Mr. Chair. I think we need a very short report containing the remarks the minister made in the House and the remarks she made when she appeared here. We don't need a lengthy report; just one dealing with the remarks in question.

I agree that that is the way to proceed.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there any other comments on this issue?

To recap for everybody, we will have a report done by the researchers and our clerk, which will be ready to discuss on Wednesday.

Is there any other business?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Not dealing with this, but we have the other stuff.

The Chair: We have other business we want to deal with?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes.

The Chair: Can we go in camera for those who want to talk about more committee business?

We'll suspend and go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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