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## Standing Committee on Official Languages

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, March 9, 2010**

—  
**Chair**

Steven Blaney



## Standing Committee on Official Languages

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

• (0905)

[Translation]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mrs. Isabelle Dumas):** Good morning everyone. I see a quorum.

We may now proceed to the election of chair.

I must inform the Members that the Clerk of the Committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. I cannot receive any other types of motions. I cannot entertain points of order and I cannot participate in debate.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party.

[Translation]

I am ready to receive motions for the election of the chair.

Mrs. Boucher.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** I move that Mr. Steven Blaney be chair of the Committee.

**The Clerk:** Mrs. Boucher has nominated Mr. Blaney for chair of the Committee.

Are there any further motions to that effect?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried and Mr. Blaney duly elected chair of the Committee.

If the Committee is agreed, we will now proceed to the election of vice-chairs.

[English]

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

[Translation]

I am ready to receive motions to that effect.

Mr. Blaney.

**The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)):** I nominate Mr. Mauril Bélanger.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Blaney has moved that Mr. Bélanger be elected first vice-chair of the Committee.

Are there any further motions to that effect?

Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare Mr. Bélanger duly elected first vice-chair of the Committee.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the Official Opposition. Are there any motions to that effect?

Mr. Nadeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** I nominate Mr. Yvon Godin.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Nadeau has moved that Mr. Godin be elected second vice-chair of the Committee.

Are there any further motions to that effect?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare Mr. Godin duly elected second vice-chair of the Committee.

**The Chair:** Good morning everyone.

I would like to thank you for the renewed confidence.

Our second vice-chair would like to raise a point of order.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** This is a point of order or a request for information. This election should have been held openly, but we are in camera instead.

[Editor's Note: Technical difficulties]

**The Clerk:** You are right, I should have checked beforehand. Was the sitting supposed to be open? I am sorry, it should have been done differently.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I suggest that we move to an open sitting, and that you announce the results of the voting, since the results should be public.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** It should also be specified that a mistake was made.

**The Clerk:** I am sorry, the sitting should have been open. Still, our representatives were present.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I understand, but for the record, the sitting should have been open.

**The Chair:** Your point is well taken, Mr. Vice-Chair.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Are you going to repeat the results?

**The Clerk:** Would like me to repeat them? Very well.

Mr. Steven Blaney was elected Chair of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Mr. Mauril Bélanger was elected first Vice-Chair and Mr. Yvon Godin was elected second Vice-Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Clerk.

First of all, I would like to inform you of a decision made by the House of Commons on March 3, 2010. The House 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. Normally, everyone should have a copy. You should have been given a copy of the routine motions adopted by the Standing Committee on Official Languages, including two motions adopted in committee on the broadcasting of specific meetings related to the appearances of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages and the Commissioner of Official Languages, as well as an additional motion on diverging or alternative opinions, if a report is drafted.

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chair, as you know, I am the NDP whip and I sit on the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I would like us to get back on track right away and not lose time because of prorogation. I suggest that the routine motions be reinstated as they were before prorogation and that we move forward.

**The Chair:** That is a good idea, as we could avoid having to adopt a set of routine motions that we had already adopted in the fall.

If you like, I could give you a quick reminder. At our last meeting, the committee drew up a schedule for the 2010 spring session. At the time, we asked the clerk to prepare a list of subjects that could be considered by the members of the committee and a list of potential witnesses. Therefore, I would like Isabelle to distribute the list.

Mr. Bélanger would like to speak. Mr. Vice-Chair, you have the floor.

● (0910)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I would like to give notice of motion.

Then, I would like to make a suggestion to the committee. I move that on Thursday we prepare a work schedule for the coming weeks, or the coming months, so that we can take note of what has already been done, since we have several new members. As there is no subcommittee, I move that we use the Thursday meeting to draft an agenda.

I would like to make a few suggestions. I am particularly concerned by the Air Canada issue. There is also the act that was initiated by both the former and current governments, but that will not be reviewed any further. I would like us to spend some time on that matter.

Getting back to the notice of motion, Mr. Chair, it suggests:

That the Minister of Canadian Heritage provide the Committee with a bilingual copy of the Contribution Agreement given to the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC), in which the federal government stated its expectations for the Games' opening and closing ceremonies by March 18, 2010.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bélanger.

We acknowledge the notice of motion. We can discuss it at the next meeting.

At our last meeting, it was moved that once we resume sitting in the new session of Parliament, we should meet with the representative of federal support for francophone media, Mr. Potié. The committee has the opportunity to prepare its work plan for the coming weeks, but it goes without saying that next Thursday is not very far off.

Madam Clerk, would it be possible to accommodate a witness such as Mr. Potié this Thursday, as we had hoped?

**The Clerk:** I will start working on this today. I sent Mr. Potié an e-mail to ask him if he was still prepared to meet with the committee, as planned, but I have still not received a reply. I will try to summon him for Thursday, if the committee agrees.

**The Chair:** So we are going to check Mr. Potié's availability for this Thursday. That will allow us to start the work of the committee.

Mr. D'Amours.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** I would like to clarify one point. Under Mr. Potié's name, it says "*Association de la presse francophone*", and below it, "*Radios communautaires*". Does Mr. Potié represent both groups, or are they two separate groups?

Actually, if we have to organize a meeting, let us meet with everyone. We are not going to meet with Mr. Potié at one time and with community radio at another time. At some stage, we will have to bring them together.

**The Chair:** There is also the English counterpart that we should not overlook.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** But the issue is federal support for francophone media, which consists of two components. If we have to hold a meeting, let us do it properly. As for the anglophone media, I agree, but that could be dealt with as a different topic.

**The Chair:** Mr. Nadeau.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Is Mr. or Ms. S. Lanthier from community radio?

**The Clerk:** No, Ms. Lanthier and Mr. Potié represent the Association de la presse francophone only.

So it has been suggested that we invite representatives from community radio stations, but I personally do not have any other suggestions in this regard, unless—

● (0915)

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** There is the Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada. It is in Ottawa, and so is Mr. Potié. That way, we could kill two birds with one stone.

**The Chair:** So we are going to schedule our ongoing work for the next meeting, on Thursday. We could then meet with these two witnesses.

Are there any other comments on the work plan?

Mrs. Glover.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would just like to welcome all members of our committee.

I would also like to hear what Mr. Potié has to say. I know he has been waiting for this opportunity for a long time. I completely agree with Mr. Nadeau: if the ARC representatives are available this Thursday, we could hear from them.

I would also like to talk about other witnesses. I want to point out that a number of topics are already included in our work plan. With all due respect, I would like to follow up on topics that were introduced almost a year and a half ago. I do not know if we are going to do this today, Mr. Chair, but it would be good to undertake a long-term study.

I know we did a good job with the study on post-secondary schools, but there are other ideas in our work plan. I would like us to decide on a potential long-term study as a group. There are several short-term studies, but I think we should do one over the long term. Could the opposition tell me what they would like to study?

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mrs. Glover.

Actually, I would like to hear from the members of the committee what their priorities are for issues to be addressed in the next weeks. That is why I gave you the handout this morning and I would like to have your thoughts on it. I want to make the most of the time we have for the work of the committee. We could certainly hold a meeting next Thursday. We are going to organize ourselves so that we can receive witnesses and have enough time to look at our ongoing work.

If possible, it would also be good if we could hatch our work plan, so to speak, or at least continue to make progress along those lines.

Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Chair, the executive and the committee were established this morning. We have just received the schedule. We also already have witnesses that we could ask to appear on Thursday morning. In my opinion, we should hear from them for the first hour. Then, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m., we could start working on the schedule. So next week, we could begin the process and, at that point, we could discuss the different topics.

It is all well and good to look at something long-term, but it is also good to look at short-term matters because they do not take much time. For example, Mr. Bélanger talked about Air Canada; that would be a long-term issue because there have been bills in the House of Commons on this topic since 2005. Then, they were set aside and brought before the House of Commons and Parliament again. This is important because Air Canada is about to securely stow bilingualism in the overhead bin, so to speak. This company does not meet its obligations in this regard. There is a total lack of respect. The company has obligations because, when its people bought Air Canada, they also bought what we might call the elephant in the plane. They do not like it, but they have to deal with it.

The government promised us that it would protect the two official languages. I do not want to be difficult..., but I spoke with Minister Cannon when he was Minister of Transport and he said it was on its way. So it could be done quickly if the minister decided to appear before the committee. The minister can make a promise, and the bill is already drafted. All the government has to do is change the date on it. If there is the will to solve the problem with Air Canada, it could be done quickly.

That is why I feel that, on Thursday, we could do this work, look at the agenda, rethink our previous ideas, reorganize them and move forward.

● (0920)

**The Chair:** There seems to be a consensus, if not unanimity, on your proposal.

There are two comments, one from Mr. D'Amours and one from Ms. Guay.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** This will be brief, Mr. Chair. We should remember that, in the second hour of looking at our work, we must consider Mr. Bélanger's motion.

**The Chair:** Agreed. Ms. Guay.

**Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Along the same lines, when a motion is introduced, it must be discussed within 48 hours. So this is important.

We should also remember the wrap-up of the Olympic Games. I think we could do that quickly. So we have to do a good wrap-up and report on them.

**The Chair:** Very well. I think we have covered all the issues. Thank you for your attention and we will meet again on Thursday.

The meeting is adjourned.





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