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Tuesday, October 5, 2010

—
Chair

Mr. Steven Blaney

Standing Committee on Official Languages

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•(0855)

[*Translation*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Simon Larouche): Honourable committee members, I see a quorum. Consequently, we can proceed to elect a chair.

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

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): I nominate Mr. Steven Blaney.

The Clerk: It is moved by Mr. Godin that Mr. Steven Blaney be elected chair of the committee.

Are there any other motions?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): I would like to nominate Mr. Galipeau.

The Clerk: Very well.

It is moved by Mr. Bélanger that Mr. Galipeau be elected chair of the committee.

Are there any other motions?

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): May I ask the clerk if we need a seconder?

No? Very well. I was about to second Mr. Blaney's nomination. Now I want to tell the committee that I withdraw.

The Clerk: Nonetheless, unfortunately, a motion cannot be withdrawn. Nevertheless we will have to...

Mr. Godin, you have the floor.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I do not know what rules we are following, but normally, when there is a nomination, we begin by asking the candidates whether they accept. This is a democracy. This is not—I hope—a dictatorship, and a person has the right to say that they do not want to be a candidate.

Nobody can be forced to become a candidate. We have never seen anyone being forced to become a candidate in any election. If you proceed in this way, you are forcing someone to allow their name to be written on a ballot.

The Clerk: I must inform the members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of a chair. The clerk cannot receive any other motion. He cannot respond to any points of order nor can he take part in the debate.

Pursuant to subsection 106(2) of the Standing Orders, the chair must be a member of the governing party.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Clerk, with your permission, Mr. Godin is perfectly right. In every democracy, if someone does not want to be a candidate, they do not become a candidate.

Thus, you must ask the person whether they accept to become a candidate. You have not done that. If the person accepts, they become a candidate. If not, they are not a candidate.

•(0900)

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Clerk, if he wins the election and then he withdraws, we have to start all over again.

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Clerk, during the elections in the other committees, if someone did not want the position, they could withdraw immediately before the vote.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Given that Mr. Galipeau does not want to be a candidate, I withdraw my motion.

The Clerk: Very well.

Is there consent to withdraw Mr. Bélanger's motion?

The motion is withdrawn.

Let me repeat the motion. It is moved by Mr. Godin that Mr. Blaney be elected chair of the committee.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

Some hon. members: Bravo!

The Clerk: Before inviting Mr. Blaney to take the chair, if the committee so wishes, we can now elect the vice-chairs.

I am now ready to receive motions for the position of first vice-chair.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): I am honoured to nominate Mr. Mauril Bélanger.

The Clerk: It is moved by Mr. Murphy that the Hon. Mauril Bélanger be elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any other motions?

Ms. Monique Guay: Yes, I would like to nominate Mr. Yvon Godin as second vice-chair.

The Clerk: This will be done next.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt Mr. Murphy's motion?

We have consent.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried, and Mr. Mauril Bélanger is the duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Bravo!

The Clerk: I am now ready to receive motions for the position of second vice-chair.

Ms. Monique Guay: I nominate Mr. Yvon Godin.

The Clerk: It is moved by Ms. Monique Guay that Mr. Yvon Godin be elected as the second vice-chair of the committee. Are there any other motions?

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

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Yvon Godin is the duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

Some hon. members: Bravo!

The Clerk: I now invite Mr. Steven Blaney to take the chair.

The Chair (Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)): Thank you very much.

I will spend the extra emoluments wisely and my spouse will gladly share them with me on a sandy beach. Ah, ah!

Good morning everyone. I thank you very much for allowing me to chair this committee's work once again. There are a few new faces in the committee.

From the outset, I would like to clarify a point. I made this mistake myself this morning. Henceforth, committees will begin at 8:45 and they will consequently finish at 10:45. We also have a new clerk whom I now welcome. I think that for the main meeting, this should conclude our first gathering. Of course, the committee structures are still the same. We have a steering committee. Thus, we could adjourn the meeting.

I see that some people have things to say. I give the floor to Mr. Bélanger, and then to Mr. Godin.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Chair, unless I am mistaken, the rules we adopted in this committee at the beginning of this Parliament are still valid.

The Chair: Absolutely, all the rules that have been made by the committee must apply. We are continuing on in the same way. Of course, let us not forget that there was nonetheless some work to do and there were also a few motions.

• (0905)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I have a second question, with your permission. Does this mean that the steering committee will remain as it is?

The Chair: You are right. For the benefit of new members, the Standing Committee on Official Languages has a steering committee that is made up of a representative from the government and one representative from each of the three opposition parties, as well as myself. This committee remains as it is. The motion is very specific, it has to do with parties and not with individuals. By the way, Mr. Rickford is now a member of the steering committee. I think that

he represents the government, but I will have to verify this. It is up to you.

Welcome, Mr. Parliamentary Secretary, to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. I also welcome my friend Guy Lauzon who is back, and Royal Galipeau who is also back with us, and Mr. Murphy who came previously from time to time and who is now permanently with us. He is an ardent defender of the promotion of linguistic duality, and it is good to know that.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: I have a final question, Mr. Chair. Do you intend to call a steering committee meeting before the next committee meeting so that we can begin to proceed with certain files?

The Chair: I will first hear Mr. Godin and then I'll answer your question, Mr. Bélanger.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would like to say two things. First, I would like to discuss the small incident that occurred before you were elected. I would like to bring this back before the committee and to hear quotations from the Standing Orders, because I have things to say about this. I find that what the clerk said makes no sense. When someone says that they do not want to be a candidate, they cannot be forced to have their name included on a ballot. Imagine if we had said yes this morning, and if we had voted, just for fun, to elect Mr. Galipeau who did not want to be elected! He would have had to pass and to hand in his resignation. I have never seen anything like this in all my life. I have never seen anything like this in any meeting or in any election. If anyone ever has, I would like to know. Perhaps we should change the Standing Orders, introduce a motion in the House of Commons, but I would really like to see where this is written, unless we can see it right away.

Moreover, let us discuss the steering committee. Mr. Chair, I suggested—I do not know whether my colleagues will agree with me—that we should meet immediately after this meeting. We have some time, and we could set up a work plan. We have a great deal of work to get done, and I do not know why we should meet only tomorrow or even later, because we need time. The morning was reserved for official languages, and I think that we could use that time, or at the very least, begin our work on Thursday rather than on some other day.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Regarding your first point, the clerk tells me that he is quite sure that he applied the Standing Orders properly. However, he will come back with detailed explanations. If this case deserves special treatment, the committee members are free to go ahead.

Of course, it is my prerogative to call together a steering committee. To do this, I will follow the recommendations from committee members.

I do not know whether anyone else would like to make some comments about this matter. I am not closed to the idea of having a steering committee meeting after this morning's meeting. In this way, we could free up our regular members. I would like to invite the steering committee members to stay for a steering committee meeting after this meeting.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Could this be delayed for 24 hours?

I am a new committee member and I would like to suggest something to the steering committee. Would it be possible for this meeting to take place in 24 hours from now and not right away after this meeting? I think that the committee would like to discuss my topic. However, I am not sure that I can suggest it in just five minutes.

What period of time does your plan cover?

● (0910)

The Chair: I'd simply like to remind you, Mr. Lauzon, that the committee made a full report on immigration. This report is ready to be studied and we could adopt some of its recommendations.

I would like to hear what the steering committee members have to say about this. Before we begin new work, I think I should consult the members of the steering committee.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Will there be another opportunity to make suggestions during the coming weeks?

The Chair: Yes, there will be.

The steering committee will meet fairly promptly. It is clear that the members will be consulted before beginning any new work. Moreover, all the steering committee reports must be approved by the committee.

Let us adjourn this committee meeting. Steering committee members, are you available?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: With your permission, I have a suggestion to make. If we take 10 minutes between both meetings, Mr. Lauzon will have the opportunity to speak to representatives from the government or from the steering committee. And we could also make a concerted effort.

The Chair: We will resume the work of the steering committee in 10 minutes.

The meeting is adjourned.

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