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CANADA

## **Subcommittee on Neurological Disease of the Standing Committee on Health**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, February 16, 2011**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Tim Uppal**



## Subcommittee on Neurological Disease of the Standing Committee on Health

Wednesday, February 16, 2011

• (1300)

[Translation]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Christine Holke David):** Honourable members of the subcommittee, I see we have a quorum. We can now proceed with the election of the subcommittee chair.

[English]

I must inform members that the clerk of the subcommittee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, entertain points of order, or participate in debate.

[Translation]

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

[English]

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** I would like to nominate Tim Uppal as chair.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Mr. Patrick Brown that Mr. Tim Uppal be elected chair of the subcommittee.

Are there any further motions?

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

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried, and Mr. Tim Uppal duly elected chair of the subcommittee.

**The Chair (Mr. Tim Uppal (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC)):** Thank you, subcommittee members.

We will actually now need consent to proceed to other business. Is there consent around the table?

Go ahead, Ms. Hughes.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** I have one point of clarification. Does that include a vice-chair? Do we do the election for vice-chair or do we not do one?

**The Chair:** Only the position of chair was vacant.

Do we have agreement to move on to other business?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** It looks like we do.

Since this is a business meeting, we will begin with the analyst.

Do you have suggestions or some comments you'd like to start off with?

**Ms. Karin Phillips (Committee Researcher):** From what I remember from the previous session, there were two meetings that we wanted to have. One was a final follow-up on MS and access to CCSVI, and then I believe there was a desire to have an overarching meeting focusing on research and, in particular, barriers in the process for accessing research funds, where we would have CIHR—

**The Chair:** Sorry; the meeting, right now, is still public. Would you like to go in camera for this business portion? Is it the committee's will?

**An hon. member:** I don't think it matters.

**The Chair:** No? Then we will continue in public.

Go ahead.

**Ms. Karin Phillips:** I think those are the two items that need to be scheduled, and after that we would look at when you would like to see a draft report.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Hughes.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** At one committee meeting, I had requested that two days be allotted for a discussion of multiple sclerosis. For some reason, I now see that we're down to one day. Since our meetings only last one hour right now, I think we need to extend them. That's the first step. Again, I'm asking that two days be allotted to the issue of multiple sclerosis and its treatment. I am also asking that a day be set aside to examine autism. Let me explain why. We've had panel discussions on autism, but we have never had an autistic person testify. I would like to invite one such person to testify and also, to ask that person's mother to take part in the proceedings. This autistic person is an adult and is now attending university. I think it's important to hear from someone who has firsthand experience with this illness. Perhaps she can give us a better idea of the direction we should go in.

• (1305)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any comments?

Go ahead, Mr. Brown.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** I think we have the discretion. There's no set deadline for when we have to complete this, so if we extend it a little, it doesn't hurt.

There are three things for which I want to suggest one-day additions as well.

One is that a common theme in all of this has been caregiving help. It would be interesting to have a session just on what suggestions the charities and associations for the major five neurological disorders want to put forward, specifically on caregivers, to this committee. I realize it's a little tricky, because it's not traditionally a federal role, but we could hear from them about what type of federal interventions they'd like to see specifically on caregivers. That would be a one-day session that I'd recommend.

The other two things I was interested in are these.

First, we had the funding that was announced two years ago now, I believe, for Neurological Health Charities Canada doing that enumeration. It would be interesting to see whether they have any interim findings they could share with us in terms of prevalence of neurological disorders in Canada, because that's obviously a helpful argument for us if we're trying to explain why this needs to have a light shone on it. If we can highlight how many Canadians this affects and back it up with some stats they've discovered, I think it would be helpful.

That would be a one-day session with Neurological Health Charities Canada on any interim findings they have from their population study. I remember that when we spoke to the neurological charities before, they said they would have some interim data at some point soon, so I hope there's something they could share with us.

The last one-day session would deal with a topic that I would like to delve into a little bit more, if there's agreement. There has been reference made to international partnerships with France and the U. K. and Germany. I'd like to hear what that discussion has produced, if we could ask for a one-day session specifically on what the results of those international partnerships are. It's great to hear about them, but I want to know what work is being done because of them in terms of what we are learning, how we are progressing, and what we should be recommending in our final report to grow those partnerships. If they are resulting in success, then obviously they are something we might want to point more towards.

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

Go ahead, Dr. Duncan.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to pick up on what my colleagues have said.

I would support absolutely having two more hearings on MS. Something you should be aware of is that in the first week of March you have two major international conferences happening; one is in Italy and one is in Poland. I will not be here that week. I will be away, but we need to hear the latest data out of that fourth set of conferences.

We need to hear from people who have autism, and I'll support Patrick concerning the international strategies. What is going on overseas, and how can we blend with that, for example? I'm going to bring it back to the Year of the Brain, and there are other partnerships being built that we should be building on. Canada is going to play a major role in the next year.

On caregivers, I don't know whether we want to bring this piece in. I think we should talk about what our plans are going forward with this. Are we just going to write a report and say this is finished, or how do we keep the momentum up on this issue? Are we going to take a look at neurological conditions and the tie-in with mental health? They've been kept separate.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Monsieur Malo.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Regarding Ms. Duncan's last point, I think we should draft a report, forward it to the health committee. It could then consider it and decide on an appropriate course of action. Once the subcommittee has drafted its report, its work is over.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We don't have any speakers on the list. Is there any other discussion?

• (1310)

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** I have one final comment.

The only concern I have is that there is always election speculation. Maybe there is no election this spring—it seems as though the noise is dampening a little bit—but what if there is an election? What if it occurs after a budget? Should we file an interim report before a potential budget?

I think everything we do would get lost. We'd have to have those hearings.... We can't take notice of what has been said if we reconstitute in a new Parliament, can we? So if, say, they announce the budget is going to be April 6 or March 29—whenever it is—maybe the week before, we can all agree to meet to make sure that we table something in the Commons. At least we would have some record of what we've done over the last six months.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Doctor Duncan.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** I'd absolutely support that. I would hate to see this work lost. I'm wondering whether we could ask the analysts, our wonderful colleagues, if it's possible to start drafting something that we can take a look at. After all the witnesses who have come forward and all the time and effort, it would be awful to lose any of it.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Monsieur Malo.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** In that case, Mr. Chair, the solution would be for the subcommittee to draft a report right away. If my colleagues do not want the work that has been done to be for nought, then the first thing to do is draft a report and send it off to the main committee. It will then be up to the main committee to table it. The fact is that we report to the main committee, not to the House. We're required to follow a series of procedures and steps.

If Mr. Brown's and Mr. Duncan's main objective is to have the committee table the report, then that is what we need to focus on during our upcoming meetings, especially since Mr. Duncan will be unavailable during the first two weeks of March. The subcommittee will therefore not be meeting then. So, we do not have a great deal of time left. That means that on March 9, subcommittee members can begin drafting the report, which could then be presented to the main committee on March 23. Rumour has it that the budget will be tabled on March 22. So then, if tabling a report is truly what you want to do, then we need to act on March 9.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Maybe we can allow the analysts to discuss a little of the timeline—what they would need, and things like that.

**Ms. Karin Phillips:** Having reviewed the evidence, I see that we actually have a fair amount of testimony on caregiver support, so I'm comfortable with that. In an ideal world, if we could just have the one meeting covering the research as a whole—maybe that could be on March 9—then after the break week, you'd have a draft report.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** I think the problem is that if we consider it after the break week in March and there is a budget, as some have speculated, it means that after break week it's too late. I like Luc's idea of doing an interim report, because if we do a final report, that rather shuts us down. If we do an interim report that is simply a summary of everything we've heard, we can then take the time afterward, if there's no election, to come out with some strong recommendations, but we can do the summary for what we've learned so far on March 9.

**The Chair:** Dr. Duncan is next, and then Mr. Malo.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** I agree; we need a report, and I think we have to put it through the health committee. I think we do want those extra hearings.

Could we do an addendum to that report? Why don't we try to issue a full report that we can get through the health committee so that it's on record, and then, if we get the opportunity to have those extra hearings, do an addendum? What do you think?

**The Chair:** Let me just interject something. The discussion right now with the analysts is that a summary of evidence is not a report and would not be tabled in Parliament, so if you want something tabled in Parliament, that should be the goal.

•(1315)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** That is precisely what I was about to say, Mr. Chair. A report is a report, not something halfway.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'll allow the analysts to discuss the timelines they need to make this happen.

**Ms. Karin Phillips:** I think the earliest you could get a report in both languages would be March 9.

**The Chair:** Is that for them to review?

**Ms. Karin Phillips:** Yes, that would be for you to review.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Can we have it a few days before that, so that we can discuss it?

**Ms. Karin Phillips:** Yes, I mean discussing it on March 9; you would get it before then. It just requires a week to write and a week to translate.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Maybe we can do meetings in the evening and go as long as it takes to go over it, because one hour on March 9 to do the report is not going to be adequate.

**The Chair:** The other step, colleagues, is also to have time on the health committee itself to review it and to agree to report. There are two steps here.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Here is what I think we should do. At health committee we bring a motion and ask them, for March 9 or March 11—whatever the appropriate day is—to review it.

What day of the week is March 9?

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Why don't I take a motion into the health committee asking them whether we could have time to take a look at this?

**The Chair:** The meeting will be on March 8 or 10. The minister is coming on March 10, so it won't happen that day.

**Mr. Luc Malo:** I'm sure we won't have time to finish studying on the report on March 9. If there's only one hour to discuss it...

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** I was thinking it would be more than one hour.

**The Chair:** Extend the meeting.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** We just can't let our witnesses down; we can't.

I like Patrick's idea of working late on March 9. On March 10 we had one hour for the minister, and there was another hour that was...

**The Chair:** No, it's going to be officials and the minister. That's the usual practice.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** When is the next health committee meeting after March 10?

**The Chair:** It's not until March 22.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Is there any other process that we can bring forward? I don't know.

**Ms. Sonya Norris (Committee Researcher):** Can I just ask a question?

An interim report often doesn't contain recommendations. Are you looking at an interim report with recommendations? That will change how much time you need to consider it.

**The Chair:** Does an interim report get tabled in Parliament? That is the goal here.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** You can't do the report earlier than March 9?

**Ms. Karin Phillips:** The thing is that it needs to be written and translated. It takes about a week for it to be translated and a week to write.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** We're gone next week, so March 2 is not an option.

Basically, we have no choice. March 9 is the earliest we can go with, and that's the date to shoot for.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** We'll just hope that any budget vote is several days after March 22 or March 28, whenever it is. They haven't actually come out with a date; it's only speculation anyway.

**The Chair:** At this point, since we have some agreement that March 9 would be the time for the draft report, we need to decide what time we would meet.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** I'm not familiar with all of the procedures and I am just trying to get some sense of whether, if we did an interim report and an election took place, there is a way that we could resuscitate that interim report.

**The Chair:** If there is an election and, after the election, the subcommittee is created again, the subcommittee could vote to have all of that testimony brought back.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** This is just a question. We talked about March 9 as the meeting; that's when we looked at the Wednesday. We can't do it Wednesday at 1:00, or we can't do it Wednesday evening, because there are always votes Wednesday evening. Just for that week, would our schedules allow us to do the meeting on Tuesday, March 8? Is everyone's Tuesday completely booked up?

• (1320)

**The Chair:** We would take a risk doing it in the evening, if there are votes. There generally are votes on Wednesdays.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Could it be March 10, in the morning?

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Monsieur Malo.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Be that as it may, even if we do manage to discuss the report on the 9th, and even if we sit until 11 p.m. and ultimately adopt it, I'm not certain that the translators and the analysts can complete their work in time for us to table it to the committee the next day. I doubt if that's possible.

The chair has pointed out that the subcommittee can be reappointed after an election and that the evidence presented can be brought back. Why not continue our study, see it through to the end and table the report during the next Parliament?

[*English*]

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** I guess I'm leery of doing that. We don't know who will come back, who will be on health, or whether they will want a subcommittee. I hate to lose this information. I'm certainly willing. I like Patrick's idea to work late. I'm certainly willing to do that if people find that their schedules will let them work late on March 8 or March 9. I really feel we have to get something concrete, through.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Is there any way to a meeting on the evening of the 8th or 9th?

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** I'd do it.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Hughes.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Again, I'm trying to understand the gist of this discussion. Are you saying that if the report is not tabled, the evidence presented can be brought back? If we table an interim report to the health committee, will it go any further than that?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** No. A report would be a report, so if it's the report that gets tabled in Parliament, that will be the report. You won't be able to table an interim report.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** No, but the issue is whether an interim report drafted by the subcommittee and tabled to the health committee must be tabled in the House. Will there be enough time for the committee to table the report to the House?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** That is then up to the health committee to take out time to review it and agree to report it to the House, so you have two committees to deal with.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** The question is whether they will have enough time.

**The Chair:** Well, it's the committee's will. It can decide to have time.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Why don't we put a motion forth to ask if it is willing to take that time?

**Ms. Sonya Norris:** As we were just discussing earlier, the minister is coming on the March 10.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** I just think we should put a motion forth and ask if we can get this reviewed here. We've done a lot of work, and I think it's incumbent upon us to ask the health committee to take a look at that work.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Malo.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** In that case, let's go with the 9th, after the voting at 7 p.m. We can work until 11 p.m. and give the analysts time to do their work. The main committee can then consider the report on the 22nd. The subcommittee could always meet again on the 10th—or on the 11th since the Friday is also a possible day for a meeting—to ensure that the analysts have indeed respected the spirit of the subcommittee's work.

• (1325)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** With that plan, you are assuming that the health committee would be okay with dealing with it on March 22. You would have to convince your colleagues to do so, and I don't know what... What was the study for March 22? Does anybody remember? I'm sure we have it somewhere. It was on drug shortages.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** There are four of us here who can all make that argument.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** I think that is a very good idea.

**The Chair:** Drug shortages was presented by the NDP just so... Ms. Leslie had brought that forward.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Maybe we should bounce everything back by one day. What we suggest is not to put drug shortages off the agenda, just to...

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** We can ask them. I don't know what the position will be of the delegate there.

**The Chair:** I suppose the process would be to bring a motion forward. It's up to the members to discuss this with their colleagues and have that motion to change the schedule at the next health meeting.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Would you be comfortable with my putting forward a motion? We can get it drafted today. Is there consensus?

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Hopefully this is all for naught, and we've been better safe than sorry.

**The Chair:** Just to add to the procedural issues here, a motion drafted today would not be 48 hours in advance of the meeting tomorrow, so you would need unanimous consent tomorrow to look at the motion, so I think what you're going to do is to ask for unanimous consent tomorrow to bring this motion forward. That will be procedurally correct.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** I think the chair will do it in a very nice way, so...

**The Chair:** What we have agreed to, then, is a meeting on Wednesday, March 9, from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., to consider the draft report.

Mr. Malo mentioned something about meeting again on March 10. Was that just a suggestion?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** We'll see if that's necessary, after our meeting on the 9th. Things might go very well, but then again, there may be problems. We have no idea right now how things will go.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** That's fair. We will leave it until then.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** I think we have a lot of common values on this. I don't think it will be too difficult to put together. I don't think the analyst will be here until 11:00, but we should prepare as if it will last that long.

**The Chair:** Is there something over here?

**Ms. Karin Phillips:** We just wanted to know if you guys wanted to have a meeting on March 2. The testimony wouldn't be able to be included in the report, but...

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** We've done this all together, so I think it's better that we don't do March 2 if Kirsty is not here.

**The Chair:** Then there's no meeting on March 2.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** If there are no elections, we can revisit at the end of March the request to hear from other witnesses, as we discussed. If we go to the polls, then a decision will have to be made later.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, you would do that at the will of the committee after a report is completed.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** We could decide at the end of March, because there is a lot more for us to look at, but let's see if we have a spring.

**The Chair:** Are there any discussions or items that need to be addressed?

Ms. Hughes, did you have a comment?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Are these times and dates firm? So far we only have the 9th scheduled in, correct?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** So far, we have only March 9 scheduled in.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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