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Chair

Mr. Merv Tweed

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• (1120)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC)): Welcome to Bill C-20, an act to amend the National Capital Act and other acts.

The witness again today, on behalf of the Department of Transport, is Simon Dubé. Welcome again.

When we last adjourned we had moved on to clause 11, and the first amendment on clause 11 is government amendment G-7.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Yes, Mr. Chair, thank you.

I would put forward G-7 for clause 11. The idea of this particular clause is it amends paragraph 12(1)(a) of the NCC Act, to clarify that the development proposals by federal departments on any lands in the NCR must be submitted to the national capital region commission for approval before the start of the project, if the proposal forms part of the project and it meets one or more of the following conditions. The three conditions are laid out there. The conditions in this case are that the project is to be carried out within the national interest land mass; the project involves a heritage building; or the project relates to a transaction to which the Government of Canada is a party, if the transaction provides for or contemplates the right of Her Majesty the Queen to occupy for a term of more than 25 years, even under a lease.

The Chair: Comment?

Monsieur Proulx.

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): I just want clarification, Mr. Chair. The substitution under proposed paragraph 12(1)(c) talks of “the department”. Would this apply strictly to properties in the Gatineau Park and the greenbelt, or is this at large for an NCC property?

Mr. Brian Jean: My understanding is it's projects to be carried out within the national interest land mass, so it would include all of it. That's my understanding.

Mr. Dubé.

Mr. Simon Dubé (Director, Portfolio Management, Crown Corporation Governance, Department of Transport): Actually it goes beyond that, because the first part of proposed section 12 deals with any land in the national capital region, and that intends to cover any federal projects that will be on lands in the region. So it's already clear in the rest of proposed section 12 that all projects go through

the National Capital Commission when a department, for instance, wants to change a building. For approval they go to the NCC. Proposed paragraph 12(1)(a) deals with other lands that are not federal property, but the NCC would still have a right of approval and the design and the land use would be for federal use.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Chair, if I may, I would like to ask the witness a "quiz" question.

That means that the temporary 35-year lease between the National Capital Commission and Public Works and Government Services, on behalf of the House of Commons, for the building at 1 Wellington, is illegal because it was signed before this change?

Mr. Simon Dubé: In fact, given that it is a property that already belongs to the Commission, the Commission will definitely have a right to oversee the design and appearance of the building and the use made of it.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: That's not what I'm asking, Mr. Dubé. There is a lease at present between the National Capital Commission and the Department of Public Works, on behalf of the House of Commons, for the building at 1 Wellington Street—some say it's at 1 Rideau Street—where the former Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography was located.

Public Works told us this was a temporary lease to provide meeting rooms for House of Commons committees, that it was leased temporarily. When we asked for a definition of "temporarily", we were told the lease was for 35 years. So that is beyond the 25 years referred to here. Does that mean that the 35-year lease was not legal at the time it was signed? The National Capital Commission could not have signed an agreement for more than 25 years. Is that how I should understand it? I'm asking you the question.

• (1125)

Mr. Simon Dubé: No. We're talking about different things here. The authority to enter into a lease isn't covered at all under section 12 of the National Capital Act. Section 12 deals with proposals made by federal entities to erect or alter buildings in the National Capital Region. So we aren't talking about a transaction like a lease, it's rather about what is done to the actual structure of the building.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: It doesn't relate to leasehold improvements.

Mr. Simon Dubé: Exactly.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: In the case of the Portrait Museum, because everything was done in the form of leasehold improvements, the outside of the building wasn't touched.

Mr. Simon Dubé: Right, it isn't subject to this authorization.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Seeing no further comment, I will ask whether amendment G-7 shall carry.

(Amendment agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: We're now going to move to amendment BQ-9.

Monsieur Nadeau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This amendment deals with the powers of the NCC relating to the National Interest Land Mass.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there comment?

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: I was not sure; I just checked the records, Mr. Chair. I thought this particular one was found not to be admissible because of other ones that were previous in time.

The Chair: Because of the difficulty in presenting it as an adjunct to the previous BQ amendment, I've allowed it to be presented for debate.

Mr. Brian Jean: That's not a problem.

This obviously would reverse everything in relation to clause 11 and quite a bit of clause 10, I think, and would eliminate the clause on the national interest land mass.

Is that the idea of the clause, just so that I can have clarification?

The government would vote against that, of course.

The Chair: Monsieur Proulx.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Could we have clarification from Mr. Nadeau on the purpose of this amendment?

The Chair: Monsieur Nadeau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: This means the entire subject of the National Interest Land Mass we talked about last time. This issue is causing problems for us because we think it amounts to interference in territory that belongs to the Government of Quebec.

First, we submitted an amendment in which our proposal was set out, but that amendment was defeated. As a result, we would like the rules relating to the National Interest Land Mass to be removed, because we do not recognize the power of either the NCC or the federal government in this regard.

[*English*]

The Chair: Seeing no other comment, I will ask whether amendment BQ-9 shall carry.

(Amendment negated)

(Clause 11 as amended agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: We're now going to move to clause 13, where we start with amendment BQ-10.

Monsieur Nadeau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We believe it is time to eliminate the NCC's power to expropriate. The federal government has used that right several times in recent decades. If we consider Forillon National Park, or the people who live in the area of the present Greenbelt, we cannot ignore the extent of the human tragedies experienced by the families that have been displaced.

I am thinking of the Lac Philippe site, in Gatineau Park, where people had their land expropriated. That situation was extremely painful. People still talk about it today, in fact. There was also the case of Kouchibouguac, New Brunswick, and the story of Jackie Vautour.

We are therefore proposing that the acquisition of land by the NCC proceed in a more civilized manner, meaning by negotiation, particularly since the National Capital Commission has not used its right to expropriate for many years.

● (1130)

[*English*]

The Chair: Merci.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Chair, I think there's a little bit of confusion in relation to the Expropriations Act.

My understanding is that the law is such that it's beyond our power in this committee to take away the power of expropriation. What I think they're trying to do in this is make sure that it's not...

Expropriation, by the way, deals with fair market value, with any other person. They can't take it away unless there's fair market value paid, and in fact that can be challenged with the court. So certainly, first of all, there would be negotiations.

But my understanding of this particular proposed section is that we want to include the minister's having notice of it before the commission does anything, so that the minister could be involved and in fact, in my reading of the clause, not allow them to do it. My understanding is that they could do it now without going to the minister, if I'm not wrong. This would require them to go to the minister so that the minister could be involved and say exactly what we've heard from citizens here: "No, I don't want my land sold. I want to keep it in my family and I want to keep it for myself." So the minister would be involved to restrict their ability to expropriate.

I think what your proposal is doing is acting in the reverse of what you want. But possibly Monsieur Dubé could clarify this. I haven't received a brief on it.

Mr. Simon Dubé: The only thing I would mention is that first, what's proposed by way of changes to the expropriation portion of the act deals only with harmonization with the civil law in Quebec, as we've done with other clauses in this bill.

It's worth mentioning that the expropriation process is governed by the Expropriations Act under the Minister of Public Works. The only thing that this allows to you is for the NCC to go to the Minister of Public Works through the Expropriations Act to get the expropriation for the purpose of the national capital. The Minister of Public Works, through the Expropriations Act, can expropriate, but only for public works purposes. That gives a hook to the NCC to explain why they would need to expropriate through their mandate and objects and power.

The Chair: I just have Monsieur Nadeau.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I just want to say to Mr. Jean, because I didn't mention it earlier, that our amendment limits the National Capital Commission's right to expropriate, but only within the boundaries of Gatineau Park.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: But I don't think we can actually do that, because it's done through another complete act, which would have to be amended to limit any ability to do so. My understanding is that it just adds the mechanism to give notice to the Minister of Public Works, but we can't actually affect the Expropriations Act here; I mean that it's beyond our power in relation to this legislation to affect what it is. It's just to change the notice period and I think to send it to the public works minister—if I'm not wrong on that, Mr. Dubé.

Mr. Simon Dubé: Yes, and if what the Bloc Québécois is proposing were passed, it would limit the existing scope of the expropriation power that the NCC can have through the mechanism in place to Gatineau Park only; that's my understanding. But regardless of that, it would still need to go through the Expropriations Act process.

Mr. Brian Jean: So it does nothing.

The Chair: Monsieur Proulx.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to ask Mr. Nadeau to explain again, in more detail, what the intent of his amendment is.

I am neither a lawyer nor a real estate expert, and I don't understand the effect this amendment might have.

The Chair: Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Right, I'll rewind and I'll repeat my explanation, if I may.

Here, when we talk about the National Capital Commission, which is the subject of the entire bill before us, there are amendments on that point. As was said, one of the aspects we have examined very seriously, as have you in fact, and that we are very concerned about, is the entire question of the integrity of Gatineau Park. Gatineau Park, properly speaking, is completely within the territory of Quebec. It touches on several towns; one of them, Chelsea, is in fact completely a part of it.

What concerns us is the borders of the park and what is inside it. We don't want there to be real estate development inside it, because we want the character of the park to be preserved. I am thinking of lots being sold for residential development or to build businesses, and so on.

I didn't express myself very well before, in fact, and I apologize for that. I'm going to reiterate the spirit of what I said about this a little. We don't want an actual boom in Gatineau Park: we don't want real estate development. So to avoid a residential development boom in Gatineau Park, we think the right to expropriate is exerting a degree of pressure at the moment that is hindering development, and in any event, we would not want to facilitate it, because we believe in the ecological value of the park.

So the question of expropriation has to be seen as this kind of pressure on the entire park for there not to be development. That is why we talked so much about the primary purpose of the park, which is not recreational, but environmental conservation.

I want to reiterate, to cover the question of expropriation. So we think it is time to take that right away from the NCC, but to keep it for the interior of Gatineau Park.

• (1135)

The Chair: Mr. Proulx.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: A point of order.

I am wondering whether Mr. Nadeau is in fact speaking to amendment BQ-10. Is he not rather speaking to amendment BQ-11? From what I understand, BQ-10 relates to lines 8 to 10 of proposed subsection 14(1), which is not the same thing as amendment BQ-11, which relates to lines 16 to 18 of proposed subsection 14(2).

The Chair: Mr. Nadeau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I'm sorry. I was talking with someone else and I didn't hear.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: I think Mr. Nadeau is getting ahead of himself, in that he is explaining expropriation, which should be the explanation for amendment BQ-11, because amendment BQ 10 applies to lines 8 to 10 of proposed subsection 14(1), while amendment BQ-11 relates to lines 16 to 18 of proposed subsection 14(2), which deal with the Expropriation Act.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Will you give me a minute, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you, colleagues.

Mr. Proulx is right. Amendments BQ-10 and BQ-11 are like two fingers on the same hand, they go together.

I will summarize amendment BQ-10 in a single sentence: for the territory of Quebec, we are prepared to retain the expropriation aspect for inside Gatineau Park, but not for the rest of the territory located outside Gatineau Park. I don't know whether you understand, but that's what it means.

• (1140)

[English]

The Chair: Are there any other questions?

Monsieur Proulx.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Dubé, we did a rewind, as Mr. Nadeau said. What would the impact be, in light of what Mr. Nadeau has explained, outside Gatineau Park? What are we talking about? What properties or lands are we talking about?

The National Capital Commission owns land in numerous places in the Outaouais. I'm thinking of Jacques-Cartier Park, for example. That would mean that the National Capital Commission would not be able to expropriate a property adjacent to the park... I don't understand.

Mr. Simon Dubé: In fact, it would limit the power to expropriate land, based on the delimitations set out in the Act, to outside Gatineau Park.

The National Capital Commission's only recourse, for property located outside the park, would be to approach the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and see whether the property in question, that it wanted to expropriate outside Gatineau Park, falls within the definition of "public works". That might potentially be difficult to do, particularly if it were, for example, to expand Gatineau Park.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: By definition, that means we would be handcuffing the National Capital Commission when it comes to any future development on the Outaouais side.

Mr. Simon Dubé: That's possible. However, you have to keep in mind that expropriation is an instrument of last resort. Normally...

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Right. That is always what applies?

Mr. Simon Dubé: Theoretically, yes.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you.

Le président: Mr. Nadeau, you have the floor.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: The idea behind it all is that section 92 of the Canadian constitution gives the provinces jurisdiction over property. As a result, expropriation would impinge on provincial powers.

With respect to Gatineau Park we are prepared to retain it. However, elsewhere, under what we are proposing, we do not recognize expropriation by the federal government of land outside Gatineau Park that is in the territory of Quebec.

[English]

The Chair: Merci.

Is there no further comment?

(Amendment BQ-10 negated)

The Chair: We shall now move to amendment BQ-11.

Monsieur Nadeau.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Chair, it is in the same spirit as amendment BQ-10.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Proulx.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: I want to be very clear in my mind.

[Translation]

Mr. Dubé, what does this amendment mean? Is it meant to keep or remove the right of expropriation within the boundaries of the park?

Mr. Simon Dubé: It's complementary. If amendment BQ-10 had been accepted, it would have been logical for amendment BQ-11 to be accepted as well. The two go together. As Mr. Nadeau explained, the intent is to limit the power of expropriation.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Seeing no further comment, shall BQ-11 carry?

(Amendment BQ-11 negated)

The Chair: We're now going to move to amendment BQ-12.

Monsieur Nadeau.

• (1145)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The purpose of amendment BQ-12 is to remove the NCC's right to expropriate land belonging to the Government of Quebec, within the boundaries of Gatineau Park. So that means that neither the National Capital Commission nor the federal government should have the right to expropriate from the Government of Quebec. If transfer of the management right is necessary, in the eyes of all actors, it should be mandatory that it be done by agreement.

[English]

The Chair: Comment?

Monsieur Proulx.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Dubé, what about the Government of Canada's rights of expropriation as regards a province?

At present, Mr. Nadeau is giving us only part of the explanation, because it involves only the province of Quebec or the municipality in issue. Let's look only at the provincial aspect. As a general rule, what are the agreements or powers of the Government of Canada in relation to the expropriation of provincial property, in Quebec or elsewhere?

Mr. Simon Dubé: Unfortunately, I don't have the expertise to answer that somewhat specialized question, but from what I know, in some cases relating to national parks, there has had to be an agreement with the province.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: For the purpose of an expropriation?

Mr. Simon Dubé: Exactly.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Seeing no further comment, shall BQ-12 amendment carry?

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: We'll move to BQ-13.

Monsieur Nadeau.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: The purpose of amendment BQ-13 is to offer the National Capital Commission a right of first refusal in the sale of properties and land inside the park. So if someone wants to sell their property that is inside the park, the National Capital Commission should have the right of first refusal.

The right of first refusal would then enable the National Capital Commission to have the right of first consideration for all properties sold in the park. Gatineau Park is like a piece of Swiss cheese. The Bloc Québécois believes that Gatineau Park should be entirely public. So the National Capital Commission should find ways of eliminating the residential enclaves and making the park complete. That is what we are proposing.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: My understanding... I know Mr. Nadeau wasn't here for it, but I heard loud and clear from residents and citizens of the Gatineau Park area that they didn't want this within there, and I thought that was actually one of the mandates that came back and one of the recommendations. They did not want that included within there, the ability to...and a set-out clause to do exactly what he's suggesting.

I thought we heard loud and clear in relation to citizens of Gatineau Park that they did not want this set out in the legislation. So that's why we will be voting against it.

The Chair: Seeing no further comment, shall BQ-13 carry?

(Amendment negated)

(Clause 13 agreed to)

(On clause 15)

The Chair: We're going to clause 15 now, and we're dealing with amendment LIB-8.

I just want to advise the committee that the amendment LIB-8 is not admissible at this time because it makes reference to 10(1) and (a.1) and they no longer exist, since amendment LIB-3 was defeated.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Agreed.

(Clause 15 agreed to)

(On clause 19)

The Chair: We're going to clause 19.

We have amendment G-8, and I want to advise the committee that should amendment G-8 be adopted, amendments BQ-14 and BQ-15 would not be allowed to be moved because it affects the same lines.

Mr. Jean.

• (1150)

Mr. Brian Jean: I would move amendment G-8. In my understanding, this would modernize the language of the National Capital Act, and furthermore, would reflect that clause 12 repeals section 15 of the National Capital Act.

As far as the specifics of that, it amends the references to section 2 of that act. After the title, the present schedule of the act should read

sections 2 and 22.1 instead of section 2. It's also to reflect the addition of proposed section 22.1 of the act, pursuant to clause 19, which allows the Governor in Council to amend, by order, schedule 1 of the act.

Is that pretty much it, Mr. Dubé? It seems like a lot of things. The explanation is less than the amendment.

Mr. Simon Dubé: Yes, in short it deals with the process for amending the schedules, which include the national capital region boundaries, Gatineau Park boundaries, and the greenbelt boundaries.

The Chair: Monsieur Nadeau.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I simply want to tell you that we will be voting against this amendment, for the good and simple reason that we do not consider a mere order in council that would allow the Governor in Council to alter the boundaries of the park to be a good thing.

The approval of the Government of Quebec is a condition *sine qua non*, precisely because it is a matter of preserving the integrity of the territory of Quebec.

So we will be voting against the amendment for that reason, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Proulx.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: I have a question for Mr. Nadeau.

I understand his intent. However, does that mean that future amendments from the Bloc Québécois would require that changes be approved first by the houses of Parliament, or is the intent that those changes be introduced after approval by the Governor in Council?

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Generally, when it comes to anything that affects the territory of Quebec, we want the Government of Quebec to be consulted, and yes, the changes to be approved by the elected Parliament, by the House of Commons. The Senate is of secondary importance to us. But yes, the approval should come from both chambers, the lower and the upper.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: I have a question. How do you think it could be approved by the House of Commons or by the House of Commons and the Senate?

Earlier, this request was rejected by the Conservative and New Democrat coalition. The coalition prefers that it continue to be a decision by the Governor in Council, and that it then be introduced in the House of Commons. That was the decision of the Conservative-New Democrat coalition.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Nadeau.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Proulx could not have spoken truer words, on that point.

That is why there is also amendment BQ-14, which sets out the intention you have stated and that we stated, to have the House of Commons and the Senate be the decision-making bodies.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Proulx.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Chair, this brings me to a question for the clerk, that I will put through you.

The Government of Quebec had been invited as a witness, if memory serves me, during the consultations or testimony given at the time of Bill C-37. If memory serves me, the Government of Quebec did not deign to come here to testify.

Is my interpretation of the facts correct or were there other circumstances?

[English]

The Chair: The Government of Quebec was invited to the committee to make representation and it declined that invitation.

Monsieur Nadeau.

● (1155)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Chair, yes, it was invited. Some municipalities were also invited. However, our position is based on two letters from Quebec ministers informing us of their views. If you want, I can read the two letters.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Yes.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: So I will do it. This is the Minister, Benoît Pelletier, and the former Minister, Claude Béchard, who was responsible for this issue in the Government of Quebec.

For those listening, and so what we are saying will be clear, I am going to read the following document. The letter head is from the Government of Quebec. The letter, which is dated October 16, 2007, is addressed to the Hon. Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, and reads as follows [Translation]:

Dear Minister:

We have read the report entitled "The National Capital Commission: Charting a new course" submitted by the Panel on the NCC Mandate Review on December 21, 2006. The Panel was created by yourself the previous August, following on the intention you had announced in April 2006 to undertake a review of the mandate of the NCC in order to determine whether the Commission "correspond[s] with Canada's new realities".

The Panel's report supports enhancing the status of the NCC in terms of its involvement in the planning, stewardship and management of Canada's Capital Region. It even proposes expanding its responsibilities and budget.

On several occasions, the Government of Quebec has spoken out against the methods used by the NCC in its activities in the Outaouais and the impact of its decisions, which are too often made without consultation, after a closed process that lacks transparency. The problems that have arisen in relations between the Government of Quebec and the NCC are clearly illustrated by the fact that important road infrastructure agreements that were signed in 1972 and 1985 did not come to fruition until 2007. Another agreement relating to an exchange of strategic lands that was signed in 1973 has still not been completed.

We were surprised by the panel's conclusions. After all, the powers that the NCC has at present, whether under the National Capital Act or under the general powers assigned to the federal government, are already very substantial. Moreover, despite noting that the Canadian Constitution gives the provinces jurisdiction for land-use planning, the report nevertheless promotes a new idea, that of the "National Interest Land Mass" (NILM): land in the NCC portfolio that is deemed essential to the long-term viability of Canada's Capital Region. This is a remarkably nebulous concept. It could potentially entail a risk of encroachment

on Quebec's territorial jurisdiction in the Outaouais, given that a number of important components of the NILM, including the Gatineau Park and other parcels of land in the Greenbelt, are located in Quebec. Such an expansion of the NCC's prerogatives is an extremely disquieting prospect.

In addition, the report suggests that Quebec should have minority representation, as compared to Ontario, on the new board of directors that might be installed at the NCC. The Government of Quebec takes a dim view of this kind of imbalance in Quebec's representation on what would become the managing body of the NCC. Knowing in advance that important issues that affect Quebec directly, in terms of land-use planning or integrity of the territory, will be addressed there, Quebec calls for equal representation on the board.

● (1200)

In short, while Quebec may agree with the recommendations of the Panel that, for example, propose greater transparency in the NCC's decision-making process, it is firmly opposed to any federal plan based on strengthening the presence and activities of the NCC in the Outaouais in Quebec that would impair or, at the least, threaten the territorial integrity of Quebec. I would therefore be grateful if you would take all necessary measures in this regard to defend the interests of Quebec.

Sincerely yours,

Benoît Pelletier
Minister

That is the first letter.

I will now read the second letter, which is a little shorter.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Proulx, on a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Chair, I had asked Mr. Nadeau to tell us about the letters. I have a lot of respect for Mr. Nadeau, but one of the letters, the one that has not yet been read, was written by a minister at that time. So it is practically ancient history.

Surely there have been discussions between the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada, through Mr. Cannon, who commissioned the Paquette study, if I recall correctly.

I would like to ask the witnesses here this morning whether any other meetings or discussions have been held between the Government of Quebec and the Department of Transport or the National Capital Commission, recently, and if so, whether the Government of Quebec has expressed any interest in changing the position taken by the Government of Canada.

[English]

The Chair: Before I recognize Monsieur Dubé, do you have a comment, Monsieur Nadeau, or...?

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Chair, I have heard the comments by my colleague Mr. Proulx. The first letter does date from October 2007, but the second dates from November 2009. It is shorter. It is from Mr. Béchard and is addressed to Josée Verner, who was then and is still today the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The letter reads as follows [Translation]:

Dear Minister:

Bill C-37, An Act to amend the *National Capital Act* and other Acts, which is currently being considered in the House of Commons, is a cause of some concerns for the Government of Quebec, and some

This is the case for the concept of "National Interest Land Mass" defined in the bill, which will enable the National Capital Commission (NCC) to designate all or a portion of any immovables that are part of the National Interest Land Mass that is part of, for example, Gatineau Park and other land located in and around the City of Gatineau. This new tool, due to the NCC's increased presence on the Quebec side of the Outaouais region, further complicates the Government of Quebec's exercise of its jurisdiction with respect to land-use planning. As well, Quebec's minority representation, as compared to Ontario, on the NCC board of directors, is still unacceptable, in view of the potential impact of the decisions that will be made on the Outaouais in Quebec.

I would therefore reiterate the request made by the Government of Quebec in a letter sent to your predecessor on October 16, 2007, a copy of which is attached, that all necessary measures be taken by your government on these issues to respond to Quebec's concerns.

Sincerely yours,

Claude Béchard

I would point out that the letter of October 16, 2007, that he refers to is the one I read to you before this.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, what I've heard from Mr. Nadeau is exactly what we've done. They asked for an enhancement of the board for representation from Quebec. The government listened. We agreed to that. What have we not done that they've asked for? We have done everything that they've asked us to do.

My suggestion is that we move on. It appears to me that Mr. Nadeau is trying to...I'm not sure what.

We've already dealt with this. "National Interest Land Mass" is in the act already. All of the other sections are within the act. Even if Bloc amendment 14 is passed, it still won't make any sense in the bill itself because of all the other amendments that have been made.

So I don't really understand the relative move by Mr. Nadeau.

•(1205)

The Chair: That's not a point of order, but I would suggest that we are dealing with government amendment 8.

Monsieur Nadeau.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Jean, we have lost on the entire issue of the National Interest Land Mass, even though this is a request that comes from the Government of Quebec. It is not in what was passed here today.

In that spirit, simply to clarify things, I would like to note that you were in the House of Commons on November 27, 2006, to vote on the motion to recognize the Quebec nation. In the House of Commons, we are going to recognize fully what a nation represents, including all of the responsibilities that it must have. So it is not up to an arm of the federal government like the National Capital Commission to make decisions about the territory belonging to Quebec, even if the responsibilities of the two nations, Quebec and Canada, overlap in that organization's mandate.

That is the spirit in which I make these comments, Mr. Jean. Rest assured that I will defend the interests of Quebec by proposing amendments to bills like this one that reflect our vision of the Quebec nation.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Proulx.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could we hear the answer to my question to...?

The Chair: We're going to go to Monsieur Dubé.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you.

The Chair: The question was, have you received any other communications from the Government of Québec in regard to this issue?

Mr. Simon Dubé: I'm not aware of any direct communication between ministers and provincial ministers. Personally, I was with Madame Marie Lemay, the CEO of the National Capital Commission, in Québec about a month ago, in early October. We briefed a few officials from the provincial government and the intergovernmental secretariat in Québec City about Bill C-20, about what it is about. So it was a good discussion. At the end, they did indicate that they needed to continue discussions among themselves and they would let us know if there would be anything else.

I haven't heard from them directly since then, and I'm not aware of any further ministerial correspondence on that topic.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you.

The Chair: No further debate?

(Amendment agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

(Clause 19 as amended agreed to)

The Chair: We're now moving to a new clause, clause 20.1, government amendment number 9.

Monsieur Proulx.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: You had ruled that if G-8 was accepted, was approved, BQ-14 and BQ-15 would not be allowed.

The Chair: Yes, we've already passed it.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you.

The Chair: Clause 20.1, government amendment number 9 on page 35.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: This changes to reflect the addition of section 22.1. Mr. Chair, I understand that the act is amended by this particular section, which makes it consistent with the Financial Administration Act. It requires that it must include information respecting the commission's activities with regard to Gatineau Park and the greenbelt, and must include the acquisition of any property by the commission located in the greenbelt or Gatineau Park.

The Chair: Comments?

Monsieur Nadeau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Chair, we will be voting against this amendment in order to maintain a consistent position.

We support the idea of the Greenbelt, but it would have to be defined.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

No further comment?

(Amendment agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We're moving to schedule 1, government amendment number 10, on page 36 if you need a reference.

Mr. Jean.

• (1210)

Mr. Brian Jean: Yes, Mr. Chair, this is just to reflect what we've already discussed in detail, that it would be amended to include the following: "Description of the Boundaries of the Greenbelt".

The Chair: Comment?

This is referring back, I think, to the schedule that we talked about at the start.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Although we don't have the wording. Okay.

(Amendment agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

(Schedule 1 as amended agreed to)

(Schedules 2 and 3 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall clause 1, the short title, carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the title pass?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the bill as amended carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall I report the bill as amended to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the committee order a reprint of the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Monsieur Proulx.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: May I thank you, sir, for your sense of fair play. This has been a very difficult but pleasant experience working with you. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Jean.

Mr. Brian Jean: I wanted to congratulate the Liberals for joining the coalition of common sense. On Tuesday we had, of course, the NDP, and it was reported in several newspapers that we had a coalition. I just wanted to join in welcoming the Liberals to our coalition of common sense. I appreciate their attendance.

The Chair: I thank Mr. Jean for his comments, and you, Monsieur Proulx, for your kind comments.

With that, the committee will adjourn. We will meet the first Tuesday back and the first order of business will be Monsieur Guimond's notice of motion.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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