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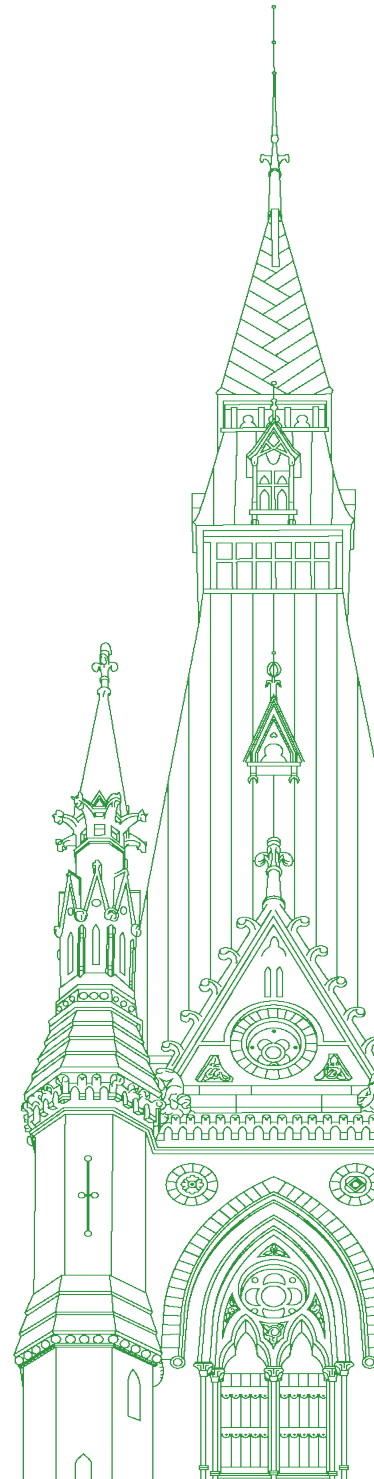
Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 124

Friday, September 6, 2024

Chair: Mr. Peter Schiefke



Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

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• (1110)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 124 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), the committee is meeting to discuss a request to undertake a study of the most recent travel chaos and the continued problems across Canada's passenger transportation system.

Colleagues, before we begin, I'd like to make a couple of comments regarding audio feedback. I'd like to remind all members and other meeting participants in the room of the following important preventive measures.

To prevent disruptive and potentially harmful audio feedback incidents that can cause injuries, all in-person participants are reminded to keep their earpieces away from microphones at all times. As indicated in the communiqué from the Speaker to all members on Monday, April 29, the following measures have been taken to help prevent audio feedback incidents.

All earpieces have been replaced by a model that greatly reduces the probability of audio feedback. The new earpieces are black in colour, whereas the former earpieces were grey. Please only use an approved black earpiece. By default, all unused earpieces will be unplugged at the start of the meeting. When you're not using your earpiece, please place it face down in the middle of the sticker for this purpose that you will find on the table as indicated. Please consult the cards on the table for guidelines to prevent audio feedback incidents.

The room layout has also been adjusted to increase the distance between microphones and reduce the chance of feedback from earpieces.

These measures are in place to ensure that we can conduct our business without interruption and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format.

We'll begin today. I'll turn the floor over to Mr. Lawrence.

Mr. Lawrence, the floor is yours.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm disappointed that we have to be here today, but I think it is very important that we are. Of course, the subject of our emergency sitting of the transport committee under Standing Order 106(4) is with respect to the unfortunate incidents that happened over the Labour Day weekend.

For those who aren't aware and didn't see media reports—of course, there were many—a train was stopped in Quebec for over 10 hours. Individuals were in extremely difficult situations. This 10-hour delay came at a time when people were expecting to arrive, to see their parents, to see their children, to get to work, to get to their medical appointments. They couldn't do this. During that 10-hour period, unfortunately, they were without power for over 90 minutes, including being without toilets or any washroom facilities for over an hour and a half. There was very limited food, limited water and some limited communication.

There were actually two mechanical breakdowns on the Via Rail train. One was relatively minor; the second was a full engine breakdown. I think this certainly merits questions, and it merits investigation. If it were in a vacuum, perhaps I would not have as much frustration as I do with this Liberal government. However, we have to look through the recent years.

In fact, you only have to look back to my riding, actually, the beautiful town of Cobourg, where a train was stuck for over 18 hours during the holiday season of 2022. That story in itself was, to me, a significant ordeal, particularly for those involved. It was overshadowed by the chaos that occurred at Canadian airports. Many media reports covered what happened at Pearson Airport in 2022. I suspect that many of the people watching there, if they weren't involved, know someone who was. These were people who were counting on getting home to see grandchildren, to see children, and instead were stuck in the airport for hours at a time.

That's why we called this Standing Order 106(4) emergency meeting of the transport committee to schedule a series of meetings to get to the bottom of this and to make sure that if incidents happen again, they don't result in such tremendous ordeals of people being stuck for hours on end without any way of getting to their loved ones or making their business meetings and, perhaps most disturbingly of all, going hours with limited food, sometimes without electricity, and even with limited washroom facilities.

Mr. Chair, if it's okay with you, at this point I'd like to move my motion, which is to schedule a series of meetings. Mr. Chair, is that acceptable to you?

The Chair: Yes, sir.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Perfect.

I believe the motion has been circulated in both official languages. If it has not, we will make sure that it is shortly.

Madam Clerk, do you have it? Yes. Perfect.

I'm going to read it in English, and then we'll make sure that everyone has an English copy and a French copy.

The Chair: I'll let you read it, sir. Afterwards, I want to confirm that everybody has it. If they don't, perhaps we'll suspend for two to five minutes to make sure that we can all be on the same page.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: I think that's fantastic, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'll turn the floor over to you, sir.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Perfect.

I'll read the text of our motion.

Given that,

a) Over Labour Day weekend, passengers on Via Rail train 622 from Montreal to Quebec City were stuck for 10 hours with little communication from Via, no food, no water, and even a period of no electricity, washrooms or air conditioning, I move that this committee dedicate three meetings to investigate this incident, starting the week of September 16, 2024, and hear from:

Transport Canada officials for no less than two hours;

Via Rail leadership, including the CEO of Via, for no less than two hours;

The Minister of Transport and Quebec lieutenant Pablo Rodriguez for no less than two hours by himself; and,

That this committee condemn the federal government's failure to sustain reliable passenger transportation systems, as demonstrated by the facts below, and report this finding to the House.

b) Via passengers were stranded for over 18 hours with little to no communication during Christmas of 2022, 40% of Via trains were late in 2023, and Via paid out \$11 million in bonuses in 2023 despite these failings,

c) Canadian airlines are among the lowest-ranked North American carriers when it comes to customer satisfaction and Toronto Pearson has been ranked the second-worst among the largest airports in the continent for overall traveller satisfaction.

Mr. Chair, I bring this motion with the utmost good faith and sincerity. I hope we can find resolutions and solutions so that passengers and Canadians never again have to suffer through these unneeded and horrendous delays.

Thank you.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lawrence.

Before I turn it over to members, I see there are a lot of hands up. I'll make sure that we get to everyone.

Why don't we suspend for five minutes so that everybody has a chance to look at what's been put forward by Mr. Lawrence?

This meeting is suspended. We'll reconvene at 11:21.

• (1115)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1120)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Colleagues, our speakers list as it stands right now has Sherry, Luc, Xavier, Taylor and Dan.

I'll turn the floor over to Sherry. Mrs. Romanado, the floor is yours to discuss the motion put forward by Mr. Lawrence.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank my colleague for bringing forward this motion for a study.

In looking at the motion, I think we can all agree that the focus of this study and the concerns we have are about the experience of the passengers who were affected on this train. However, I don't see an opportunity for those who were actually affected on the train to provide their testimony. I think we should offer those who were affected the chance to come and share their story about what happened so that we can better understand it.

I'm trying to think of the best way that this committee could move forward to understand what happened. I think it would be great to hear from the passengers, Via Rail, Transport Canada and, of course, the minister, but I think we really need to hear from the passengers.

With that, I'd like to amend this motion to include the passengers who were on Via Rail train 622 on that date. Obviously, after part a), I don't support the statements as indicated. I would amend the motion to remove sections b) and c). I think we can all agree that the focus is to make sure that this never happens again and to understand what happened.

Again, I would like to amend the motion to include the passengers in section a). Actually, I would also amend it to include that the committee request the letter.... I believe there were media reports that the Minister of Transport issued a letter to Via Rail. I would ask that the letter from the minister to Via Rail be shared with this committee as well.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Romanado.

Could you clarify the aspect you'd like to have removed, just so the clerk and I can put something more concise together?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Certainly.

The amendment is that after "Given that," and section a), we include a bullet to include the passengers affected, and that we also remove the words from "This committee condemn...", which make up the remainder of the motion, and replace that part with "That this committee request the letter the minister sent VIA Rail, as reported in the media."

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Romanado.

We've heard the amendments as proposed by Mrs. Romanado.

I see your hand, Mr. Lawrence.

The discussion moving forward now will be about the amendments put forward by Mrs. Romanado.

[*Translation*]

The next speaker is Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to be here to talk about this totally unacceptable situation. Passengers were stranded on a Via Rail train for nearly 10 hours when they were only 45 minutes from Quebec City and barely a few minutes from Laurier-Station, a village located in the future riding of Mégantic-L'Érable-Lotbinière. They were right next to it. I can guarantee that there was a way to help people get off the train and to their destination. I think it is important to be here to shed light on this situation.

Let me explain to everyone what happened. Passengers were kept in the dark and received little explanation from Via Rail throughout this awful experience. I'm going to read a few quotes from passengers who were on the stalled trains.

One passenger said:

We haven't had food since nine o'clock this morning. It's now 6:30, and people are getting impatient. What was a minor problem is now becoming a major incident.

Carmel Tanaka said:

Staff will not let us disembark, even though we are next to a highway! The toilets don't flush when they turn off the power, the air conditioning fluctuates from hot to cold, the car is filled with burning rubber scent, and there are now no snacks left on board.

Another article states that some passengers had panic attacks or were in tears. People had to call 911, and people with health issues had to be evacuated. It is unacceptable to go through this in 2024, and even more so when you consider the government's history of chaos in the passenger transportation industry. It should not have happened, especially given what occurred in 2022. As my colleague Philip Lawrence said, in 2022, passengers were stuck on a train for 18 hours. That happened in Cobourg, Ontario. What did the government learn from that incident? Absolutely nothing.

Also in 2022, there was chaos at the airports, as everybody remembers. For hours, passengers were stuck at Pearson and Pierre Elliott Trudeau airports. This is unacceptable.

Two years later, a similar event happens in Quebec, on a Via Rail train, and it seems that there was no plan to help passengers. This is an unacceptable situation. The government has dropped the ball.

In my opinion, we need to support my colleague Mr. Lawrence's original motion. I agree that we should listen to the passengers' accounts; they have a lot to say. I think this is a logical and reasonable addition. We need to listen to what they have to say. The government must listen to reason once and for all and understand that it has a role to play in this situation. We cannot ignore what happened

in the past and pretend this is the first time. We must condemn the attitude of the federal government, which failed to adopt measures after the chaos of 2022. That is why I think it is important to keep the second part of the motion, which states that the committee condemns the federal government's inability to sustain reliable passenger transportation systems, as demonstrated by the events that occurred in the winter and Christmas of 2022.

For all these reasons, I am pleased to see that the committee is moving in the right direction. We want to hear from the Minister of Transport, the Department of Transport, the CEO of Via Rail and the passengers. However, it cannot be treated as an isolated incident. It is not an isolated incident; it is the result of nine years of inaction by the Liberal government on passenger transportation. We must condemn this attitude.

• (1130)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you now have the floor.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to say that I also found it absolutely unacceptable to see people stuck on a train for 10 hours, especially since this isn't the first time this has happened. In fact, it happened in December 2022, during the holidays. We were told at the time that corrective measures would be applied, lessons would be learned and action would be taken. As it happens, here we are in a similar situation almost two years later. That can only be annoying for just about everyone around the table today.

I would have proposed the same amendment as my colleague: adding passengers who were affected by this incident to the list of witnesses. I'm very pleased to see that this has been added to the motion.

I have to say that I am a little more torn when it comes to the second part of the amendment. Basically, I tend to agree with the Conservatives, who say that the government has failed to ensure a reliable transportation system in Canada. We need only look at the record of the Canadian Transportation Agency, for example. Every time agency officials appear before the committee, they tell us that the processing time for complaints is longer than it used to be. People are discouraged; we're talking about a year and a half to resolve complaints. That delay has been getting longer and longer for years. There has been chaos at the airports, as one of my colleagues pointed out. The issue of a reliable transportation system certainly needs to be addressed. In addition, we see that the problem at Via Rail has not been resolved and that it is ongoing.

The only reservation I would have about the Conservatives' initial motion is this: I get the feeling we are writing the conclusions in advance for the study we want to do. That is why I am a little more torn on the second part of the motion, even though I agree with the substance. I think the most important thing is to add the passengers who were affected to the list of witnesses. As to whether or not the last part of the Conservative motion should be retained, I think we could always include those elements in the committee's report.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

Mr. Bachrach, the floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you.

It's good to see everyone again. It's good to be back at TRAN.

I'm joining you from Prince Rupert, the westernmost terminus of Via Rail service. It's a spot that some of you visited on the port tour we did something like a year ago.

I also want to congratulate Mr. Lawrence on his appointment as the new transport critic. It's good to have him at this committee.

On this motion that's been put forward, I share my colleagues' concern about what happened. I don't think anyone wants to see situations of rail passengers being put in a really challenging situation, with limited amenities and a lot of uncertainty about when they're going to get home to their loved ones. It's good to hear a shared level of concern around the table.

When it comes to the details of the motion, I think there are ways it can be improved. Mrs. Romanado pointed out a couple of them. I certainly support the idea of hearing from passengers.

I am concerned about a couple of other aspects. One is that the motion states some facts that are currently unclear. It states that there was no food and no water. Now, I've had a chance to meet with Via Rail about this and be briefed, and they assert that food and water were provided, although not in unlimited quantities. I think we need to be careful about making claims or statements when the intention of this study is to figure out exactly what happened.

Similarly, I believe the second part of the motion, which condemns the government, would be more appropriate after we figure out what happened, what the limitations were, what the situation looked like precisely and what the government's role was.

I'm very curious to know, because this happened at Christmas 2022.... At the time, the transport minister put out a strongly worded statement, demanding that Via Rail get to the bottom of it and make changes. I'm curious what changes the government made in 2022 that could have prevented this from happening, whether those changes were effective and whether there were things that didn't get implemented. There are a whole host of questions we can ask to get to the bottom of whether this could have been prevented.

I think there are some unique challenges when you have a train stranded in the middle of nowhere. There are some unique chal-

lenges in getting those passengers to the nearest station and home to their loved ones.

I know that in the U.K., for instance, they have surplus equipment stationed at strategic points along the corridor for situations precisely like this so that the passenger service provider can go to the aid of a stranded train and push it to the station. We don't have that in Canada. We have a rail system that, frankly, is underfunded and doesn't have enough resources—

• (1135)

Mr. Luc Berthold: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Just amicably, Mr. Bachrach, it was not in the middle of nowhere; it was just beside my riding.

Voices: Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: As someone who has a very large riding—the size of Poland—I take the point. I apologize profusely. Of course these places are unique and important places and they are not in the middle of nowhere. I was trying to characterize the relative remoteness. It wasn't going through the heart of an urban centre. My apologies.

Anyway, to get more to the point, I support adding passengers to the witness list. I would like us to remove the statement that there was no food or water, because I don't think that has been established yet. It is certainly something we can ask Via Rail, and we can ask the passengers what they were provided.

I also support Mrs. Romanado's amendment to remove the other two parts.

To me, the airports thing feels like a separate topic. I understand it's transportation. However, if we're going to create an omnibus motion that condemns the government for all of their failings on passenger transportation, I'd love something in there about their failure to replace Greyhound with any semblance of an effective passenger bus system in this country. Of course, we could go on and on. My preference would be to keep it short and to the point and to call the witnesses. This is an important study.

I know Via Rail is motivated and certainly willing to appear before the committee. I hope the minister shares their willingness and that we can get to the bottom of this and then report our findings to the House and improve our passenger rail system so passengers don't face similar circumstances in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess I can't amend an amendment. Is that correct? Is doing that not our practice? Do we frown on that?

The Chair: Yes, and then we're going to have to deal with yours, followed by Mrs. Romanado's, and then go to the main motion as amended.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I believe Mrs. Romanado is first in the queue with her amendments. Perhaps we can deal with hers, and then we can come back to mine. It's also not the hill I'm going to die on, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: If we can talk about the substance of it, I don't think we're that far away. Then we can effectively figure out the way forward in terms of procedure.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Okay, I'm happy with that. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bachrach, we've noted the changes you've proposed.

Next we have Mr. Muys followed by Mr. Lawrence once again and Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Muys, the floor is yours.

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To the discussion about adding the voice of passengers to this study, that absolutely makes sense. To the discussion of the wording, as a point of clarification, we should indicate “no less than two hours”, or some sort of measure of time, as is indicated for the other proposed witnesses.

I want to speak as well to the second half of the motion, about the ongoing issue of travel chaos in Canada.

In the three years I have been on the committee, we've seen this time and time again. Mr. Chair, it's kind of like the movie *Groundhog Day*. We had the travel chaos in December of 2022 and an emergency meeting in January 2023. In fact, in that emergency meeting, we heard from Via Rail, the then CEO and the then customer care person. We heard about lessons learned. We heard about water and food and all these things. However, these questions arise again. We had travel chaos and an emergency meeting in 2022 and 2023.

We also had an emergency meeting in the summer of 2022 about chaos at the airports. In this committee, we've had other discussions on the chaos at the airports. I recall reading the display board at Toronto Pearson Airport on a sunny day in April when it was 15° outside, and the first 14 flights of the day were all delayed. Obviously this is an ongoing issue that merits further discussion. The trains aren't running on time. The planes certainly aren't running on time. There's chaos at the airports. Canadians are paying the price, and Canadians deserve answers. I think this merits further discussion, so I fully support the second half of this motion.

Thank you.

• (1140)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Muys.

Next we'll turn the floor back over to you, Mr. Lawrence.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: I believe there are three issues currently up for debate or discussion. Two of them are relatively easy fixes. The third one we'll weigh into. Unfortunately, though, I suspect the math is against me.

The first one, of course, is on passengers. We are agreeable to that. We would add that it be a separate meeting and for no less than two hours. I think that's more or less what Mrs. Romanado wanted.

The second one is fine, Mr. Bachrach. What we would do is this: Instead of saying “no food, no water”, we would suggest “limited food and water”. That would be consistent with what Via Rail has told us and what the media reports are. That solves two of the three issues.

With regard to the third issue, I don't believe this is foretelling what's going to be happening in the report. In fact, I think it's just laying the groundwork of what has already occurred. I think it's fair to say—and I think even Mr. Bachrach would agree—that the Liberal government has had nine years of travel chaos, and we're just sort of setting the foundation for our report. What's in here is of no debate. In part b), we have people stranded for 18 hours over Christmas, which happened in my riding, so I can tell you most assuredly that it happened; “40% of Via trains were late in 2023”—that's of no debate—“and Via paid out \$11 million”. That's from VIA Rail itself. None of that will be changed by the report.

Finally, the other parts are also from reports and are of no debate either. They're just reality. I think setting the foundation with condemnation of the federal government's failure to maintain and sustain reliable passenger transportation is only reasonable.

With regard to the final part that Mr. Bachrach said with respect to bus transportation—which has also affected my riding, I might add, and I think is an excellent issue—I would be pleased to have that added as well, if that means gaining his support for having this condemnation. I'm hoping that we'll have the Bloc and the NDP on board.

Mr. Chair, especially as a new person here, I don't mean to step out of turn, but I would maybe suggest that we canvass the NDP and the Bloc. If they want to join us in condemning the Liberal government, they're welcome to do that. If not, we're willing to carry forward with the motion with the other two changes that we've agreed to.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lawrence.

Next we have Mr. Drouin, and then we'll try, if there's nobody else on the speaking list, to get to these subamendments, amendments and so forth.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Drouin, the floor is yours.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As Mrs. Romanado clearly explained, we agree with the gist of the motion, which is the way passengers were treated. I don't think any government can guarantee that rail transportation be 100% perfect.

I was reading an article that said in France this year, passengers were stuck for eight hours without water, food, electricity or toilets. In Canada, we have to make decisions, because the situation is unacceptable. I myself was stuck on a train for eight hours. Fortunately, I had food and everything I needed. Obviously, the passengers are the ones who have suffered from this situation, and I think it is important to focus on them.

The second part of the motion strays a bit from what is important. The heart of the matter is specifically the incident that occurred on the Labour Day weekend. Let's leave it at that. The committee will be able to draw its conclusions once it has heard the testimony. If the members of the committee want to condemn the government, they will be able to do so. I'm not a regular member of the committee, but the permanent members will be able to do that.

The motion refers to Canadian airlines. I don't know if you travelled in 2022, but it was chaotic all over the world. The chaos wasn't just at Pearson; it was everywhere. I myself was stuck on planes. Again this year, flights were cancelled outside Canada. We could bring up a ton of examples, but we have to focus on the heart of the matter, which is the incident that occurred on train 622. The committee will be able to draw its conclusions once it has heard the testimony. That is why I will be supporting Mrs. Romanado's amendment.

• (1145)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

[*English*]

I think we have some pretty good suggestions here. What we'll do first is to go to a vote, if there's nobody left on the speaking list with regard to the subamendment put forward by Mr. Bachrach, which I believe was to change “no food, no water” to “limited food and water”. I think we're all clear on that. We'll go to a vote on that.

Mr. Bachrach, I'll turn it over to you to confirm that first before we go to a vote.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: There's the question of washrooms as well. It says “a period of no electricity, washrooms or air conditioning”. I think that's accurate and tracks with what I heard from Via. I'm happy with “limited food and water”.

The Chair: Thank you for clarifying and confirming, Mr. Bachrach.

I'll turn it over to our clerk for a vote on the subamendment proposed by Mr. Bachrach.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We will now go to a vote on the amendments proposed by Ms. Romanado. Before we do that, I just want to confirm that all of our members joining us virtually have received the revisions sent by the clerk. I believe they were sent out about 10 or 15 minutes ago.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Before we go to that vote, if we could have just a two-minute break so I could chat with my team, that would be great.

The Chair: We'll suspend for two minutes and then we'll come back to vote on the amendments proposed by Ms. Romanado.

• (1145)

(Pause)

• (1150)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order. We are now discussing the amendments put forward by Ms. Romanado. On those, Mr. Lawrence's hand is up.

Mr. Lawrence, you said you wanted to add something or make a modification.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Thank you.

Maybe I'll just give a little context, and then we'll get to the subamendment that I want to move.

The Conservatives are 100% in agreement that we should have passengers as witnesses. We want to vote for that. We obviously feel differently with respect to how some members of the committee feel about the condemnation of the Liberal government and about travel chaos. What we would propose is a subamendment that would remove the removal, as it were, of the condemnation in paragraphs b) and c). The previous amendment would be to include just the passengers as witnesses.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lawrence.

I understand what you're trying to do and the reasoning behind it. However, we're in a situation in which we have the amendments put forward by Ms. Romanado. From a procedural standpoint, we need to be voting on those, and if they fail, then we can go back to a discussion and propose more amendments. However, we do have those amendments on the table, and removing that part would actually change the amendment that was put forward by Ms. Romanado.

Mr. Berthold, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I'll just jump in quickly. I don't want to get into a big procedural debate, but let me make a bit of an argument.

The amendment proposed by Mrs. Romanado contains several elements. It is perfectly normal for us to want to withdraw part of the amendment by moving a subamendment before adopting the amendment. The passengers and the second part of the amendment are two completely different issues. If the proposed subamendment substantially changed the entire amendment, I would agree with you that we first have to vote on Mrs. Romanado's amendment.

However, since these are two completely different issues and we want to vote for Mrs. Romanado's amendment on the condition that this part be removed—it's a bit like what we did in the case of “limited food and water”—I think we can move my colleague Mr. Lawrence's subamendment.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

[English]

I've confirmed with the clerk that it is something that is allowable, because it's not removing everything in Mrs. Romanado's amendment. We can have a subamendment put forward to remove a portion of Mrs. Romanado's amendment. Now we'll begin the discussion on that.

I'll turn it over to you, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Chair, just to clarify, it's not just removing a portion of Mrs. Romanado's amendment. It's removing 90%, I would argue, of Ms. Romanado's amendment. If I look at the text and the words, it's removing almost 99.9% of the amendment. I would argue that it's removing the spirit of the amendment of Mrs. Romanado.

I'm just trying to understand the advice you gave to us at first, which was that we had to vote it down, or after that, when the amendment was proposed.... Why has your ruling changed from your first ruling to your second?

The Chair: Let me confer with the clerk, please....

We will go to a vote on the subamendment proposed by Mr. Lawrence, which is essentially to remove, I believe—

Mr. Philip Lawrence: I would like just two seconds on that before we go to the vote on the subamendment. I want to get in one point in just 30 seconds—not even that.

The Chair: I've been quite lenient on this. I want to go to a vote on this. I think everybody knows where they stand on it. I'm going to go to a vote.

Just to be clear, we're voting on removing the third aspect of the amendments put forward by Mrs. Romanado. She spoke to the inclusion of passengers. She spoke to including the request for the letter. She spoke to removing certain aspects of the motion as put forward by Mr. Lawrence. We're currently voting on whether or not to remove those aspects that Mrs. Romanado requested be removed.

Are we all on the same page? Okay.

I'll turn the floor over to you, Madam Clerk.

(Subamendment negated: nays 6; yeas 5 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you, everyone. We will now go to a vote on the amendments as proposed by Ms. Romanado. For that, I will turn the floor over to you, Madam—

• (1200)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, before we do that, can I propose my subamendment? I had my hand up there for a second.

The Chair: Sure. I thought that was for a point of order, but go ahead.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I would like to propose a subamendment to add a third point, as per Mr. Lawrence's suggestion. It is to add “The government has failed to provide the leadership and resources

required to re-establish reliable, affordable bus services connecting Canadian communities in the wake of Greyhound's termination of its Canadian service.”

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach, thank you for putting forward that subamendment.

I will have to make the ruling that it's not within the scope of the meeting under Standing Order 106(4) that's been put forward. It's not that I disagree with the intent or what's behind it, but I don't think it's within the scope of what we're trying to get at here, which specifically addresses the rail chaos.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: What are we trying to get at here, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: We could read out terms of the Standing Order 106(4) meeting that we're here to discuss. It relates to trying to get to the bottom of what happened to the passengers who were stranded for—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, I don't have the Standing Order 106(4) letter in front of me. Does it refer to the status of Canada's airports?

The Chair: It does not. It deals with—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Then could I have a ruling on whether that's in order?

The Chair: If you want to challenge the chair with regard to my decision that it is out of scope, by all means do so. It's your right, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I'm just looking for consistency, Mr. Chair. It feels like we're all over the place.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I will challenge your decision, but I'm a little bit lost in terms of procedure. Maybe you could help me out here.

Ms. Romanado brought an amendment to remove paragraphs b) and c). Mr. Bachrach is proposing a paragraph d), I think. Do I have that right? Am I missing something here?

I'm sorry. It's still the summer for me.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: You're correct.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Are we removing paragraphs b) and c) and adding d)? Is that what we're doing? Sorry.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: No.

The Chair: It was put forward by Ms. Romanado that we would remove “This committee condemn” and everything below that.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: That's right, yes. What was Mr. Bachrach's subamendment to that?

The Chair: Mr. Bachrach, do you want to reread the subamendment you were putting forward regarding Greyhound buses in the country?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I would be happy to.

As I followed what just happened, the subamendment to sustain the three points was defeated. Is that correct?

The Chair: Yes, it was defeated.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Right, so we're now talking about Ms. Romanado's amendment, which is to remove those points. I'm making a subamendment to add an additional point.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Okay.

The Chair: Your additional point is with regard to Greyhound service in Canada. Correct me if I'm wrong.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Yes. I bring this forward, Mr. Chair, because the way in which I vote on Ms. Romanado's amendment to remove all of those points depends on whether or not my point is included. I'd like to have the question of whether we add an additional bullet dealt with before I vote on whether to slash the whole thing.

The earlier point made by Mr. Lawrence was that he was amenable to adding a point about buses. If he's amenable to that, then I'm amenable to keeping all the points. Otherwise, I'll vote with Ms. Romanado and we'll keep it really simple.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: When a decision of the chair is challenged, can a debate be held on the decision or do we simply proceed to a vote? I don't know the procedure for that, but someone could perhaps enlighten me.

• (1205)

The Chair: Normally, we have to go straight to a vote.

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: I believe I still have the floor, if I'm not incorrect.

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead, Mr. Lawrence.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: It's my fault. I'll take responsibility for that.

In response to my colleague from the Bloc, I don't think I've actually moved to challenge the chair, but I will move that now. I'll challenge the chair's decision that Mr. Bachrach's subamendment is out of order.

The Chair: We'll go to a vote on challenging the chair. If you're voting yea, you are voting to uphold the decision to not include a reference to Greyhound bus service in the amendment, or then to not entertain the amendment by Mr. Bachrach. If you're voting nay, it means that you are voting against the chair's decision.

Correct me if I'm wrong Madam Clerk. You're voting yes to uphold, or you're voting nay to vote against the chair's ruling.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 6; nays 5 [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: The ruling of the chair stands.

Now we'll get to the vote on Ms. Romanado's amendment as proposed.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1 [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: The amendment proposed by Ms. Romanado carries.

Mr. Lawrence, before we go to a vote on the main motion as amended, I believe you have something you want to add.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, I do want to propose one more amendment. I think it could be dispensed with relatively quickly, as I believe that members have made up their respective minds, but I want to bring another amendment. That would start with the same language that was removed. I'm aware, of course, that you can't bring back the same. We would amend it to also include "the failure of this Liberal government to protect and to maintain bus transportation".

The Chair: Before I have to rule that out of order, because you can't amend your own motion, can you ask another member of your caucus to put that forward, please, since you are not allowed to amend your own?

• (1210)

[Translation]

Mr. Berthold, the floor is yours.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I propose the same thing.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Can he read it in French, please?

[English]

The Chair: Do you want to just reread it, perhaps, for—

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Maybe we could suspend for one minute, and I'll get it to you, if that makes sense.

Some hon. members: Please.

The Chair: We'll suspend for two minutes to allow Mr. Lawrence to distribute his amendment.

Beforehand, do you have a question that you want to have addressed, Mr. Muys or Mr. Bachrach, before I suspend for two minutes?

Mr. Dan Muys: No. I was just going to actually suggest the same amendment, so that's fine.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Muys.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I'll wait for the amendment to arrive. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

The meeting is suspended for two minutes.

• (1210)

(Pause)

• (1220)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

As discussed during the break, Mr. Lawrence, we will be turning it over to Mr. Muys to formally put forward the amendment that you've proposed, as he is able to do so.

Mr. Muys, I'll turn the floor over to you to read that out for consideration, please.

Mr. Dan Muys: Thank you.

I do not have the exact wording in front of me. I'm sorry.

Okay, here it is. I move "That this committee condemn the Liberal government's failure to protect reliable passenger transportation systems, including Canadian bus systems, and report this finding to the House."

That is the paragraph.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Muys. That was distributed in both official languages.

Go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: This amendment is a bit like the one that was presented earlier. That said, Canadian bus systems do not come under our jurisdiction. I don't think Montreal or Quebec City are asking the federal government for approval to have a bus system in their municipalities. I don't see why the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities would look into this issue, which has nothing to do with the federal government.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

Are there any other questions or comments on the subamendment proposed by Mr. Muys?

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, the floor is yours.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to vote against the subamendment because it just rephrases the proposal made by Mr. Bachrach a little earlier. There may be some interest in condemning the bus transportation system and the fact that the federal government is not interested in it. Inter-provincial transportation could fall under federal jurisdiction, but, to my knowledge, the federal government has given up on managing buses.

I would just like to mention that it is important for us to focus on the incident that occurred at Via Rail last weekend, on Labour Day. Right now, we are all over the map. I think we need to focus on why we're here today. We have to move things forward, invite witnesses and begin the work.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

We'll go to a vote on the amendment proposed by Mr. Muys.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: Colleagues, the clerk and I will now work diligently to ensure that these meetings are set up as requested. Thank you all very much.

With that, this meeting is adjourned.

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