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Thursday, June 2, 2005

—
Chair

The Honourable Don Boudria

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.)): We have a quorum, both a regular quorum and a quorum for the purpose of listening to witnesses. All parties are represented this morning.

I just want to remind honourable colleagues of the order of reference that is before us today. It is, first, the question of privilege that has been raised by Mr. John Reynolds, member of Parliament for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. The second is a question of privilege that has been raised by Mr. Chong of Wellington—Halton Hills.

In brief summary, both have to do with the postal system and how it has been allegedly used by other members of Parliament, or the offices of other members of Parliament. There is a third case, that of Mr. Mark Holland.

Mr. Holland, we wanted to do the three cases this morning. Unfortunately, we're informed that it's not possible for us to deal with the Mark Holland complaint this morning. All three have been ruled by the Speaker as being *prima facie* cases of privilege or otherwise having been referred to this committee. Informally, since those three complaints have come in, many other MPs have contacted my office with variations of complaints of the same nature, but not all of them the same. The three cases we have before us this morning are not even all the same within that group.

[Translation]

That said, if colleagues agreed, we will now begin hearing our first witness this morning, Mr. John Reynolds, MP.

[English]

Mr. Reynolds, thank you for being with us this morning. Would you like to start by making a brief statement first?

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Chairman, I don't have anything written down, but I'll make a brief statement. I think it's a pretty simple issue. We all know that the various parties use what are called ten percenters, which they send into ridings of their choice across the country. I know there's been some concern, to some degree, about how political they're getting. Nevertheless, we all do it, and the cost is fairly minimal.

In the last few months, I've noticed in my riding a massive amount of mailing, franked mailing, envelopes from various Liberal members of Parliament arriving at doorsteps, and constituents are

phoning me and asking why they are getting this Liberal advertising paid for by the taxpayers. Some of them phone and ask who's paying for it. Is it being paid for by the Liberal Party? I say no.

It's a franked envelope. I have samples of the envelopes. I thought the clerk had them, but my office is on the way with them right now, and I can pass those around.

You know, there's a great cost difference between that and a ten percenter. My guess is—and the experts could probably tell us the exact amount—that the ten percenters probably work out to about 5¢ a piece. But a piece of mail is 50¢. The postman has to handle it like any other piece of mail with a stamp on it—put it in individual boxes—individually addressed with a name and address. Inside is a piece of material that says what a great job the Liberal Party is doing for Canada and, even more so, what a great job they're doing in my riding. That's what bothers me the most. They have listed all the things, with all their pictures—I forget how many Liberals there are in B.C. right now, seven or eight or nine or whatever it is—and they're saying that this is the great job they've done in West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast for you.

I think that when they start going that far, that does affect my privileges. Most of the things that were done were things that I worked on too. That is what upset me, and that's why I brought it to the House. I don't think we should be allowed to use mass mailings of franked envelopes with material inside in other people's ridings. The Speaker agreed, obviously, and wanted it to come to this committee.

I know that Mr. Lee, Derek Lee from Scarborough—I was noting his comments—agrees with me. I think a lot of members agree that it's getting out of hand and something should be done about it.

• (1110)

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

I wonder, colleagues, if you could assist the chair. Because of the nature of the two complaints, would it be your agreement that we listen very briefly to the next one and then we could maybe ask questions of both? It could be that a question we ask one we will immediately want to ask the other something similar. Is that agreeable?

Mr. Chong, would you like to join Mr. Reynolds and perhaps take just a few minutes and describe the nature of your complaint?

Mr. John Reynolds: Mr. Chairman, there are the envelopes. There are four samples.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Chong, the item that was brought to the attention of the House was brought by our colleague on Tuesday, May 10, 2005. Again, it is an issue involving mailing privileges. Maybe you could make a brief statement, Mr. Chong, and describe in a little bit more detail the nature of the complaint.

Mr. Chong.

Mr. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, committee members, for allowing me to appear.

There are really two issues here.

The first is that while, technically, one can use the frank to send out mass mailings, I think it's a violation of the spirit of the frank. I don't think it was ever intended to use the frank to send out tens of thousands of addressed envelopes with the same enclosure; in other words, to use the frank for mass bulk mailings. That's the first point.

But I think the second issue is more important, and that is about the enclosure. I've made copies of this enclosure. It was sent into my riding. The big issue I have with it is that for those who aren't politically aware—and most people in the country are not constantly consumed with politics—if you read this enclosure, you come to the conclusion that your member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills, which is the riding I represent, is Mr. Fontana, because the footer of this enclosure says “A message from Joe Fontana, member of Parliament”. It doesn't indicate that he represents the riding of London North Centre, and when you look at the text of the enclosure, Wellington—Halton Hills is prominently displayed everywhere.

So as a non-incumbent MP and somebody who is making a valiant attempt to raise awareness in my riding of who people's federal member of Parliament is, I find that this causes a lot of confusion and difficulties. I think this is a violation of my privilege inasmuch as it's preventing me from fulfilling my role as a member of Parliament, because I get calls from constituents. Our office has received a number of calls from constituents who are confused about what this mailing is all about, and who exactly their MP is. So that second issue is the bigger issue.

I've made copies of this for the committee. So, Mr. Chair, if you wish to have this distributed, I have a folder here.

•(1115)

The Chair: Mr. Chong, we will now listen to questions from colleagues.

I just want to be clear: is the nature of your second complaint—and I'm not trying to put words in your mouth—that someone is trying to portray himself as being the MP for your riding when the person is not? The person may be an MP for another riding, but that's another matter. Is this what you're suggesting?

Mr. Michael Chong: What I am saying is that one could come to the conclusion, upon reading this enclosure, that the member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills is one Mr. Joe Fontana.

The Chair: So it's not direct.

Mr. Michael Chong: That is not necessarily a conclusion one would come to, but I certainly think that it's not unreasonable for some people to come to that conclusion. So I think it's causing confusion. I'm not going to speak to motive here or what the intention was.

The Chair: Thank you.

We do have a number of people who want to ask questions.

I know that both our witnesses this morning have brought documents. The chair is in some difficulty, because the documents that were brought are, of course, the documents that were distributed. However, the documents that were distributed were distributed in the manner that they were and therefore are not bilingual. I'm not at liberty to distribute documents that are not. Those are the rules of the House, and that's the way it is. If someone wants to consult them informally later, they can do so. Meanwhile, I will have them translated and circulated to honourable members.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Chairman, I have a point of order. Can we, with unanimous consent, decide to...

[*English*]

The Chair: By unanimity, the committee can do what it likes, I suppose. Is that what you are seeking?

Mr. Scott Reid: I suppose so. I seek unanimous consent under the circumstances.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): We would like this to be translated.

However, I do have a question about the envelope. Does it have a Canada Post franking mark, or the MP's franking mark on it?

The Chair: What we're talking about here is the MP's franking mark—in other words, the franking stamp that appears in the corner of the envelope. This has nothing to do with the bilingual nature or otherwise of the content. On the stamp is the name of the MP and his riding. Just for the information of members, I can read you what appears on this first envelope. It says : “Hon. Joe Fontana, MP, London North Centre”. That is what is written. On the other one, it says : “Don Bell, MP, North Vancouver”. On the third envelope, it says : “H. Fry, MP, Vancouver Centre”. On another one, it says : “Don Bell, MP, North Vancouver”.

[English]

So this is what's on the envelopes. But as I said, the contents of them are not bilingual, but I'm reading for the benefit of MPs what's written as the frank on the corner.

[Translation]

Ms. Pauline Picard: Is it the same thing for Mr. Chong, or is it a ten percenter?

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Chong can answer that himself, but I understand it's the exact same thing. We're talking about franking privileges, and not ten percenters.

Is that correct, Mr. Chong?

Mr. Michael Chong: That's partially correct. We're talking about two things. The first issue is the use of the frank for a mass mailing. On the second issue, the actual enclosure in the envelope makes it confusing as to who the member of Parliament is for the riding of Wellington—Halton Hills.

The Chair: Okay. On what members want to know at this point—because the rest will become evidence once the document is translated and distributed—we're not talking about the ten percenter; we're talking about something that was sent using the franking privileges. Is that correct?

Mr. Michael Chong: That's correct.

The Chair: First we'll start with the official opposition, Mr. Johnston.

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, CPC): On that point, it's not clear to me whether this is a ten percenter. It doesn't seem to be in the ten percenter format. It is something that has been sent out in a franked envelope. I know from being on the Board of Internal Economy that this has been brought there on different occasions, when it was felt inappropriate that mailings that were fairly partisan in nature had been sent out in bulk under franks.

That's all I care to say about it at the present time.

• (1120)

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Longfield.

[English]

Hon. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Oshawa, Lib.): I'm reading the historical guide—the notes prepared for the standing committee—and a ten percenter can be distributed in two ways: as addressed mail, or unaddressed mail. It's still considered to be a ten percenter, but it's sent as addressed mail under the franking privilege. It is a ten

percenter that they're talking about; it's just the way in which it's sent.

The Chair: I'm sorry, if I may interrupt, we do have the House of Commons staff here, and once we have our witnesses we can ask them to explain how this works in greater detail. I understand that Monsieur Bard and others are present, and they can fill us in.

I just thought that might be of assistance, and I apologize to our colleague.

Hon. Judi Longfield: I'm reading from what has been distributed to us, and it simply says ten percenters can be sent to Canadians in two different fashions. In the case of addressed mail, the member's office provides a diskette. Then it talks about regrouping and says, “please note that these fall under the category of letter mail since they are mailed under the member's frank”.

Mr. Reynolds, would you have the same concerns if it hadn't been done under the frank?

Mr. Chong, if the subject matter is not to your liking under a frank, would you have similar concerns about subject matter that was sent as bulk mail?

Mr. John Reynolds: I have concerns about this piece of material in whatever way it happened, because at the top it reads, “A message from Prime Minister Paul Martin's B.C. team”. On the bottom it says, “This information is provided to you by Prime Minister Paul Martin's B.C. team”.

That would indicate to me, as an average citizen, that the Liberals had paid for this, not the Government of Canada. It goes on to talk about Canada's economy. The back page has a whole section on Powell River, and a whole section on federal funding at work in West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. It lists all the Liberal MPs and senators from British Columbia.

Hon. Judi Longfield: So your feeling is that the taxpayer would feel this was being sent out by the Liberal Party. If I had a similar piece that had the Conservative logo on it and was sent the same way, would that be the same interpretation—that it had been sent and paid for by the Conservative Party of Canada?

Mr. John Reynolds: I have no problem with.... I think we should do this, and I've brought it up before. It should be stated at the bottom who printed it: “printed by the Government of Canada”, or “printed by the House of Commons”. We should all look to that.

My concern on having them mailed in envelopes is the cost to the taxpayer. On the ten percenters, I know the Board of Internal Economy is looking at them—at least they were when I left it anyway, because of the partisanship that was happening in them. That should be looked at. But I have a greater concern that when it's in an envelope and the postman has to put one in every box because they are addressed, the cost is a lot higher.

Hon. Judi Longfield: Okay, but there are two things. You agree that everything is too partisan, and we need to look at that at the Board of Internal Economy, as well as the costs.

Mr. John Reynolds: I agree with that.

Hon. Judi Longfield: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Would a member of the Bloc Québécois like to ask a question?

Ms. Guay, please.

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): I would like some clarification. First of all, we use ten percenters. We believe this to be an important tool through which Members of Parliament can ensure that their constituents are aware of what is going on, of what they're doing, and how they feel about specific issues.

On the other hand, sending bulk ten percenters costs much less than franking. I didn't even know that we could use franking.

I, personally, would like to know how much all of this costs. Perhaps we could get that information, since we have the experts with us today? I would like to be given an idea of the difference between the two. How is it that we can use our franking privilege? A letter costs 50¢, but when you send a ten percenter... I would like to be given an assessment of the two options.

I'm also very anxious to read the translated document. That will really give us an idea of just how partisan the material being sent to our colleagues' ridings really is. At the same time, there is no doubt that this can cause confusion.

The Chair: Okay. As I said, we have House of Commons staff here who can answer those questions. As soon as we have finished hearing from these two Members of Parliament, we will have a chance to put those very questions to House of Commons staff.

• (1125)

Ms. Monique Guay: I would like to know what we are not allowed to do.

The Chair: That is what we are going to tackle right afterwards. In the meantime, other Members of Parliament would like to put some questions to our two colleagues who are appearing as witnesses today.

Ms. Davies, please.

[English]

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you very much.

What I'd really like to raise is the basis on which this complaint came forward, because I think the format is one thing, and then there's the substance also.

Mr. Chong, you've said that you feel someone could have come to the conclusion that you were not the member of Parliament and that somebody else was, which I'm sure could have been the case.

And Mr. Reynolds, you've said your concern is that you've just had a mass of mailings going in.

I think we have to be really clear on what basis this is coming forward, because there is a legal provision within the House rules to allow ten percenters to happen, through either method, the franking or bulk mailing method. So I'm not sure if you're mainly challenging the substance, or whether it's the format, because there was another case of privilege, to be quite frank, before this committee, which involved Mr. Brian Masse in Windsor West, where a mailing was done by the Conservative Party. Not only was that mailing sent to the wrong member, but it was also raising a question about a member incorrectly. It was a direct attack on that member, so it actually went way beyond what either of you, I believe, are raising today. In fact, it says, is the Conservative Party of Canada on the right track? One could have argued that it, too, looked like it was coming from the Conservative Party, not through the House of Commons.

I think we need to be very consistent here. You are complaining about Liberal members who have done mailings into your riding. It seems like it's more to do with the form than the substance, but in this other case, the substance was a serious issue in terms of a member being under attack and information being factually put into the material.

So I wonder how you respond to that when your own party has actually taken this a lot further in going after an individual member.

Mr. John Reynolds: My party has never sent out franked envelopes as ten percenters; we don't do that. We send out the ten percenters. I checked with our researchers—

Ms. Libby Davies: They're both ten percenters, though.

Mr. John Reynolds: You may say that, but I'm—

Ms. Libby Davies: It's under the rules of the House.

Mr. John Reynolds: I don't like that rule. I'm telling you that I don't think taxpayers should be paying for any party to send out addressed mail at that kind of cost in the numbers my riding is being saturated with—every area of it. People are so mad about it, I think it's benefiting me, but I think it's a big waste of taxpayers' money.

Ms. Libby Davies: So you think it's okay to send out bulk mail attacking another member, but if it's a franked mail, even if it's something fairly generic, that's not okay?

Mr. John Reynolds: Well, all parties are using the ten percenters.

Ms. Libby Davies: Yes.

Mr. John Reynolds: And all parties are using them in a partisan way, and I understand that the board is looking at that—and they should look at it. But my main concern and question of privilege is the amount of money being spent in my constituency for franked envelopes at great cost to the Canadian taxpayer.

I think the Speaker thought it should come here. We should look at it and decide what happens.

Ms. Libby Davies: Why do you see a difference between a franked envelope and a bulked ten percenter?

Mr. John Reynolds: They're about a dollar a piece.

Ms. Libby Davies: So it's the money.

Mr. John Reynolds: In my riding, that's maybe \$50,000. I have more homes in my riding than any other riding in this country. Every time the—

Ms. Libby Davies: Your concern is—

The Chair: Order, please. Let's speak one at a time. The Hansard people are somewhat challenged if the person questioning and the person answering are speaking simultaneously.

Mr. Reynolds.

Mr. John Reynolds: Every time they do that in my riding, it's probably a cost to the taxpayers of \$50,000 or \$60,000 for every mailing. It's happening on a regular basis.

I know why they do it. They like to help their Liberal candidate, who got within a couple of thousand votes last time. I don't think that's right.

Ms. Libby Davies: Are you also concerned about what is in the mailing?

Mr. John Reynolds: As I said earlier, I think that all parties are. It's being looked at by the Board of Internal Economy, and they should make the rules. I think that every party is living within the rules right now, but whether they're correct or not, it's up to your committee to make recommendations.

The Chair: Mr. Chong would like to add to that.

Mr. Chong.

Mr. Michael Chong: I am less concerned about the substance of the mailing. I think there's another discussion to be had about the partisan nature of some of these mailings. The committee can discuss it and come to a decision. But I think that when most people get a very partisan mailing, if it's clearly identified who it's from, most people are intelligent enough to come to their own conclusions.

The big issue that I have, which is slightly different from John's issue, is that somebody who read this could come to the conclusion that the member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills, which is my riding, is not me. When you look at the front of this, it has Wellington—Halton Hills written all over it in large letters. At the bottom, all it says is “A message from Joe Fontana, member of Parliament”. That's misleading, because somebody could come to the conclusion, especially in a riding where there is not an incumbent MP, that the member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills is Joe Fontana.

I would argue that is a far more serious issue than somebody sending a very partisan mailing, whether that be a ten percenter, or a

franked envelope, or a householder, into a riding where it's clearly identified where it originates from.

Here it's misleading. In my riding, I think that people could reasonably come to the conclusion that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is someone other than me. I think that's a far more serious issue than somebody sending a very partisan mailing into a riding, where it's clearly identified that the mailing is from the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, or the member for this riding or that riding. People are intelligent enough to come to their own conclusions on these issues.

I don't disagree that it may be an issue that the committee could look at, but I go back to my original point. I think that people reading an enclosure like this could come to the conclusion that their member is someone other than me. I think that's a very serious issue.

• (1130)

The Chair: Okay. It's the next round.

Madam Boivin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): I get the feeling that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will be dealing with these issues, and these issues alone, in the coming weeks. Every week, something new will come forward in this respect. If that is not indication enough that there is a serious problem in terms of these mailings, then I don't know what needs to happen for us to realize that.

I have a question for you, Mr. Chong. If I understood you correctly, the material you have shown us was sent out in one of the envelopes Mr. Boudria referred to earlier. In your case, it said “Hon. Joe Fontana”, as well as the name of the riding, on the envelope. A person in your riding who didn't look inside and received that mailing would note that it came from the Hon. Joe Fontana, and from a riding that was not necessarily yours. You claim that this could be confusing. Is that what you are saying? You're saying that this person would forget everything in three seconds? In other words, once the person opened the envelope and looked at the material, he might be confused and not know who his actual member of Parliament was.

Mr. Michael Chong: Yes, that's correct.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I don't really have much to say at this point because, like my colleagues from the Bloc québécois, I'm very anxious to see the wording in French.

I want to say something now and put it on the record. I am starting to be fed up. In my own riding, I get calls from people, I meet with people, and they receive correspondence. People are asking me what a riding sponsor is, because it would seem there is a Bloc québécois sponsor in my riding. We are seeing mailings go out to ridings all over the place. Gilles Duceppe sends extremely partisan material out to people in my riding. And this is done with no regard for boundaries. I can tell you I am fed up. I had to defend myself on the radio because I had sent a ten percenter. Yet we had tried to remain as vague as possible so that the message would not be too partisan. But when we showed people what other parties had been mailing out, they were able to see the difference between the two.

In my opinion, we have some serious house cleaning to do, Mr. Chairman. When I read the rules upon arriving here as a brand new member of Parliament, I thought to myself that the point of these mailings was to keep our constituents informed. Since then, I have realized that the rules are seriously bent. Now we're being called thieves and being told that we're conducting election campaigns with dirty money. We are being called all sorts of names in our own ridings. Is that what is meant by keeping people informed? Without engaging in censorship, I do think we will have to be a little more reasonable and avoid obtaining free publicity on the back of taxpayers.

Mr. Reynolds, I agree with you in that respect. In my opinion, this is no longer an information tool; this is no longer used to inform people of our activities as Members of Parliament, which should be important in the whole context of a democratic deficit. Unfortunately, this has become a propaganda tool that all the parties are making free use of, and it's absolutely indecent.

The Chair: Mr. Reynolds, would you like to comment?

[*English*]

Next on my list is Mr. Reid.

• (1135)

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you.

I do have a question for Mr. Chong, but I wanted to start by noting that with respect to sending directly and overtly partisan material, the issue Libby was complaining about earlier, I have in my hand a copy of a ten percenter from Libby Davies, MP, sent into the riding of Maria Minna. It has a little point to tick off here, and it says "Yes, Jack!"—presumably that means Jack Layton—"I choose a progressive alternative to Paul Martin's conservative agenda. Please send me more NDP information". So I'm not sure the New Democrats are necessarily entirely free of the stain they attribute to the other parties in the House of Commons.

Now, my question to Mr. Chong is this.

I suspect the letter that was sent out in your riding by Mr. Fontana did have his riding name on the envelope, and I base this simply on my own experience. When I was in what was regarded as a marginal riding, shortly after the last election—I only won 38% and the Liberal got 36%—I was subjected to a large number of mailings into my riding. It's now regarded as a safe Conservative riding, and suddenly the Liberals, and Mr. Fontana in particular, seem to have lost interest in the well-being of the constituents of the riding. He used to send mailings, and I received an addressed mailing at my

house. He may have confused me with the other Scott Reid, I'm not sure. At any rate, as I recall, the envelope did say "Joe Fontana, MP, London North Centre" or whatever his riding is. I frankly can't remember the interior of it. I know it didn't mention my riding.

But let's take a look at the item that has come to you. Without looking over my colleague Mr. Casey's shoulder, I see he has the item here, and it does two things. It does mention your riding specifically, which is something that didn't exist back in the days when there was mailing into my riding, and then it says at the bottom "A message from Joe Fontana, Member of Parliament" and it gives his House of Commons address, K1A 0A6.

There are two options, and I'm just wondering what you'd think of it: one, if he were to change it so it said "A message from Joe Fontana, Member of Parliament, London North Centre"; or two, if it just said "Good news for..." In my case it would be if he were to say "Good news for Lanark County" instead of "Good news for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington", or something like that. If he'd gone about it that way.... I don't know what the region you're in is called, but let's say "Good news for Wellington County". If he had done one of those two things, would that have satisfied you as being something dealing with the particular concerns you had?

Mr. Michael Chong: Thank you for the question.

Yes, it would. As a matter of fact, I'd be satisfied with something as simple as the first part of your proposal, which is just to say "Joe Fontana, Member of Parliament, London North Centre". Somebody reading this would then know it's not from their member of Parliament.

Frankly, I don't like it, but I think if he wants to use "Wellington—Halton Hills", that's fine by me. While I don't like it, I don't think we should control exactly what people are saying in their correspondence.

So yes, something as simple as requiring people to identify the riding they represent when they're sending out this correspondence would be satisfactory to me.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Picard, you have the floor.

Ms. Pauline Picard: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to respond to Ms. Boivin's comments. Perhaps this is something new in the context of a minority government, but I have been here for 12 years, and there have always been sponsors in Liberal ridings. Perhaps I can just talk about my own experience. I worked on issues for which the sponsor came to hand out money, even though she had nothing whatsoever to do with it. I had worked on the file and yet she was the one who took all the credit, singing the praises of her government and of its efficiency. The opposition is not the only one to do this; both sides do it. The idea of having sponsors in orphan ridings originated at a time when the majority government had already started to designate sponsors in our ridings.

I want to talk about two things in particular: the mailing we referred to earlier, and ten percenters. Ms. O'Brien sent us the House rules with respect to bulk ten percenters.

Here is my first question. Is the content the same for your different mailings? Is a ten percenter what is known as a bulk mailing? Did you not receive bulk ten percenters in your ridings?

• (1140)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Reynolds.

Mr. John Reynolds: The ones I saw...the envelopes are there. It's the same message from different MPs, whereas the ten percenter, I know, has to be different. My understanding is, if you do ten percenters, they have to be different in some way, and it seems to me those envelopes all contain the same message.

[Translation]

Ms. Pauline Picard: Okay. In the material sent to us by Ms. O'Brien, she says :There are two different types of ten percenters that can be mailed out to Canadians. In the case of addressed mail, the office of the member of Parliament provides a diskette containing mailing addresses to postal services and distribution at the House of Commons, which mechanically inserts the material in the envelopes, addresses them and franks them.

So that can be done; it isn't a mistake. They can be franked.

There is also the matter of the content. The content of a ten percenter is also subject to certain rules. Based on what I've seen, the content here is not consistent with those rules. According to the rules, the name of the MP and his picture must appear on the ten percenter. That must be clearly identified. But we don't have it because it hasn't been translated.

The problem with franking is that it is costly for taxpayers. If, instead of using letter mail, you opt for franked unaddressed mailings, that costs 82¢ a kilo. But when it is franked, it actually costs 50¢. I think we really have to look at this, because it's starting to be costly for taxpayers.

In my opinion, the real issue is the content of these mail-outs. If they are ten percenters, the rules have not been followed.

The Chair: Mr. Reynolds, would you like to comment?

[English]

Mr. John Reynolds: I agree, and I think we have to look at it. I also think the committee should look at whether we should continue to allow franked ten percenters to be mass-mailed out, because it's a great cost to the taxpayer. I would recommend the committee look also at some form of statement on it as to who is printing it.

[Translation]

The Chair: As you know, we have experts from the House of Commons with us today who are prepared to answer our questions, or at least, certain questions.

Ms. Davies, do you still have questions for our witnesses?

[English]

Ms. Libby Davies: With respect to the ten percenters, there's no question that every party uses them; we're entitled to. The issue is how far it goes and how partisan it becomes. There is also the cost—you're raising that as well. According to a document we received from the House in 1999, under the rules of the Board of Internal Economy, which had a subcommittee on this issue, when a member requests the printing of a document under the ten percenter provision, the name of the member should be printed on the document. It says "name", not "riding". In a technical sense, one could argue they are complying with that rule. Maybe this needs to be looked at.

I think it's far more serious when a member is actually under attack. It's one thing to send out general political information from one party into another riding. We all do that—let's be honest about it. We're all trying to get information back from people. But when that moves into attacking an individual member, sometimes on an erroneous basis, which is what happened in Windsor West, I think it's gone very far. It's attacking the credibility and privileges of that member.

There are a number of issues here. The cost is obviously an issue. But whether it's in an envelope or it's in bulk mail, it is under the rule. We should be concerned about the substance of this issue. We should recognize what's taking place. We have had some serious situations. I take it that neither of the members here would condone attacking another member on the basis of incorrect information.

• (1145)

The Chair: Mr. Reynolds. After that, Mr. Chong has indicated he would like to add something.

Mr. John Reynolds: I probably don't deserve your final statement. With regard to the other, it is expensive and the committee should look at it and make recommendations to the board. It's a tough job for the officials. But my party does not do ten percenters in envelopes with addresses; they're all done in an open distributed way.

Mr. Michael Chong: My first point is that I have never sent out franked ten percenters to anybody else's riding. So it's not true that everybody does it.

Second, you've read a rule that says it's simply the members name that needs to be stated. I know that and I think everybody accepts it. But there's also a parliamentary convention that says I have personal privilege. This means that anything that impedes my job to fulfill my duty as member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills is a violation of my privilege. I put it to this committee that a mass mailing like this, which creates confusion among my constituents about who their member of Parliament is, is a violation of my personal privilege. It impedes my ability to fulfill my duties as a member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills. People get confused, especially if you are a non-incumbent MP trying to build awareness of yourself in the riding. This is especially true when you consider that it's only about a year since the new riding boundaries have been redrawn.

My riding is made up of four previous ridings. People are just starting to get to know the new riding boundaries and their new member of Parliament. When somebody sends an enclosure like this, it creates confusion about who the member for the riding is, and that's a violation of my personal parliamentary privilege, notwithstanding the rule you just read.

The Chair: Next round, Madam Longfield.

Hon. Judi Longfield: This is to Mr. Chong.

I can understand how you might be upset that another member is mailing into your riding, but I fail to see how it impedes your privilege. You can send out four householders a year; you can send out one ten percenter a year. I would suggest that your constituents aren't confused about who their member is if you're doing your job. The fact that some other member is sending stuff into your riding doesn't preclude you from sending out wonderful, informative, appropriate householders four times a year and one ten percenter a year. I agree that we need to look at the material going into other members' ridings. I just don't agree that your privileges have been violated.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Longfield.

Mr. Chong.

Mr. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I respectfully disagree.

The Chair: That's it.

Mr. Reid.

Please remember, we also have House of Commons staff here ready to brief us. I haven't asked a question yet, but I will once everybody else has done so.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mine will be very brief.

I'm a little frustrated by the complaints we continue to hear from the New Democrats. The tone has shifted a little bit since the last one. Now, the argument is that attacks on each other are inappropriate.

I have in my hands an NDP ten percenter that was sent into Ottawa Centre when it was a vacant riding, after Mac Harb went to the Senate and before the actual election took place. This one here with the NDP logo on it was sent out, and it asks you to tick off some boxes. One of them says, "Yes, Jack! I think \$4.1 million for Mac Harb is too much." That's in reference, I assume, although it's not stated here, to his pension benefits or something of that sort.

Admittedly, he wasn't a member of Parliament any more, so I suppose his privileges as a member of Parliament weren't being violated, or could not be. But the fact is that it was an attack on an individual, and it's out of context. It's not Mac Harb's fault that the pension system is designed as it is, and that he's the age he is. I respectfully suggest that the NDP isn't clean on this score, either.

That's all I have to say.

The Chair: I think members should be careful not to attack each other. I don't think that helps us in finding a solution.

Before we get the staff to comment, at the very least I hope that all of us come to the conclusion that no mailing should go out without an MP's name and riding on it. I think, personally, it should go much further. I think all of this stuff should stop. I recognize that this is probably not something everyone would agree with. I always refuse to have material go out in my name in somebody else's riding unless it's personal correspondence. If someone from Calgary writes me a letter, I write back, and that sort of thing. But to have cases of material go out in my name in a riding where I don't even know one person, I don't think it's my job and I won't put up with it, in my own case.

Insofar as the process getting worse, I won't be around when it gets worse because I'm not running. My opinion is that some of this, at least, is damaging the institution of Parliament. That's probably more important than any one of us, for what it's worth.

I want to thank our two witnesses. We have members of the House of Commons staff who are available. Merci.

Thank you, Mr. Reynolds.

Thank you, Mr. Chong.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bard, could you come and sit at the table with us? I'm told another person would also be available to answer our questions. I believe it is Mr. Roy.

[*English*]

For the benefit of honourable members, there is no one present, I believe, from the postal branch of the House of Commons. This is the printing branch only that is here. Nevertheless, I'm sure the people have vast general knowledge of how they work.

Please remember, colleagues, that they administer the rules we make, not rules that they make. In other words, our criticism is to ourselves collectively, I suppose, not what they do, unless they maladministered something, which I doubt is the case.

In any case,
[Translation]

Mr. Bard, you heard the comments made earlier. Do you have any information to provide that could be useful to Committee members? For example, could you explain, as we've been told, that there are two different kinds of ten percenters: one that can be sent using the frank, and another that can be sent in bulk? Could you perhaps give us an overview of all of that, and of the costs as well, since a number of colleagues had questions in that regard?

We will then open it up for questions from colleagues.

•(1150)

Mr. Louis Bard (Chief Information Officer, House of Commons): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We had come today as observers, but I would be pleased to answer your questions, even though I believe the answers have already been given.

What Ms. Longfield said earlier was in fact correct. There are two types of mailings: what we call bulk, and those that are addressed. There is a difference between printing a ten percenter and the way an MP distributes it. They are two totally separate processes. An MP may therefore decide to send the material out in bulk or to provide Postal Services with a diskette containing labels and addresses. In each case, we follow the instructions received from the MP's office.

The costs that have been mentioned are also correct. It costs 82¢ a kilo, plus GST, whereas addressed mail costs 50¢.

I want to make another comment. Under the rules, volumes of ten percenters are limited. A member of Parliament can therefore send one out every day or every week. There is no restriction on the quantity of ten percenters that can be mailed out. The concept of bulk ten percenters falls within the authority of the whip. Once a month, a certain number of MPs are allowed to get together for what is called a bulk mailing. However, the number of such mailings is restricted to one per month, per caucus.

Of course, the rules with respect to ten percenters are laid out in the Members' Services and Allowances Manual. In that regard, I would draw Committee members' attention to By-law 101, which clearly defines parliamentary duties. There it says:

[English]

“includes public and official business, and partisan matters”.

[Translation]

That is what the by-laws say.

At the Print Shop, we obviously try to abide by the rules, but we cannot censure the content of a ten percenter. Whether it is a bulk ten percenter or one sent out by an individual MP, we have to give some latitude to the MP and a share of the responsibility as regards the content. So, the member of Parliament is responsible for content.

I believe your discussions are relevant and accurate. You yourselves answered all of your own questions.

•(1155)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Roy, would you like to add anything, before I invite colleagues to ask their questions?

Mr. Michel Roy (Executive General Manager, Printing Services, House of Commons): No, that's fine.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Roy.

The first person I see will begin the questioning. Ms. Picard, please.

Ms. Pauline Picard: Thank you very much for that information.

The fact is there are certain rules that apply to ten percenters. I realize that you have no right to monitor content, but there are still certain requirements. I believe the name of the MP must appear on the mailing; often, there is also a picture, and so on.

As regards public affairs or partisan matters, you have no control over content. On the other hand, there are rules in place governing the format of a ten percenter.

Mr. Louis Bard: Ms. Davies answered that question earlier, when she stated that the only stipulation as far as the MP is concerned is that his/her name appear on the mailing. It is not mandatory to state either the name of the riding or have a picture, as long as the name clearly appears on the ten percenter. That is the rule.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Casey.

Ms. Pauline Picard: Mr. Roy wanted to make a comment.

The Chair: Oh, I'm sorry; you hadn't finished.

Excuse me, Mr. Roy.

Mr. Michel Roy: I just wanted to add that there are a couple of other rules as well. For example, a ten percenter has to be printed in black and white, and the name of the member of Parliament must appear.

The Chair: Not the riding?

Mr. Michel Roy: No, only the MP's name. There are also certain rules to be observed with respect to content. Solicitation of membership in any political party is prohibited, as is solicitation of cash contributions. There is also the matter of copyright, and so on. We do have to abide by certain rules with respect to content, but in terms of the partisan nature of the material, in the broad sense, we have no role whatsoever to play in that regard.

Mr. Louis Bard: Fifty per cent of the content of a ten percenter must be different.

Ms. Pauline Picard: Are there specific rules with respect to the MP's name? Is it all right for the name to be written in small letters at the bottom of the page?

Mr. Louis Bard: There are no rules in that regard.

Mr. Michel Roy: There are no strict rules in terms of the size of the print.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Picard.

Mr. Casey.

[English]

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Thank you.

What's the average number of mailing points in a riding, across the country?

Mr. Louis Bard: I don't have the numbers with me in terms of—

Mr. Bill Casey: Would it be probably 30,000, or 40,000...?

Mr. Michel Roy: The average is 40,000.

Mr. Bill Casey: You said it was 82¢ per kilo for ten percenters in bulk mail, and 50¢ per envelope. Can you put that into perspective? I mean, 82¢ per kilo doesn't tell me much. How much does it cost to send 3,000 of these ten percenters?

Mr. Michel Roy: An average ten percenter would be around 4,000 copies. At 82¢ a kilogram, it would average around \$20 to distribute those 4,000 ten percenters.

Mr. Bill Casey: Just \$20 to distribute 4,000 copies? Imagine.

Mr. Michel Roy: That's just for distribution.

Mr. Bill Casey: So not the printing costs.

Mr. Louis Bard: Right, just to distribute.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Roy: It is a privilege granted under the Canada Post Corporation Act. Bulk mailing, which we call “dépôt en bloc” in French is a privilege granted Members of Parliament at a cost of 82¢ a kilo.

[English]

Mr. Bill Casey: If those same householders were sent by franked mail, in envelopes, it would be \$2,000. So \$20 versus \$2,000, plus the cost of the envelopes. Amazing.

Now, when it comes to partisan material, you say you don't decide what's acceptable. Who does?

Mr. Michel Roy: On the content?

Mr. Bill Casey: Yes.

Mr. Michel Roy: Well, we have rules we have to follow, as I was saying—

Mr. Bill Casey: There are specific things, yes; the name has to be on, etc. But if it gets into a subjective issue, who makes that decision?

Mr. Louis Bard: There are two ways of processing.

We first do a verification based on the rules in terms of the 50% basis and the no solicitation rule. But if we see something that, for us, is outside of...and we're confused as to how to interpret it, we'll refer it to legal services. Legal services will advise us, or we'll work with the MP at that time, making them aware of the situation.

•(1200)

Mr. Bill Casey: If you were asked what changes should be made to the system on ten percenters, what would you say?

Mr. Louis Bard: I don't think it's really for—

Mr. Bill Casey: No, I know it isn't, but if you were asked, what recommendation would you give the committee?

Mr. Louis Bard: You're asking me a very difficult question. My job is to respect the transparency of each political party. Each caucus has their views, and each uses the tools differently. A minority Parliament is quite different from a regular Parliament, and there's no doubt....

I've heard comments in the House from Mr. Jay Hill, and I've heard comments from Mr. Reynolds, comments from the Bloc, comments from Mr. Boudria. I mean, there are a lot of views, and all those views are correct. They all have different views.

I am here to serve *you*. I'm not here to respond to what the postal master is asking *me*. I'm not a member of Parliament. You're asking me a very difficult question.

The Chair: With respect, Mr. Casey, as I indicated at the beginning, the House of Commons staff did not make these rules. We have asked them to administer the rules we have made, and only we can change them, through bylaws of the board or recommendations that we could table in the House, which could then find its way there.

So I urge everyone to be careful.

Any other questions, Mr. Casey?

Mr. Bill Casey: That's fine.

The Chair: Madam Longfield.

Hon. Judi Longfield: I apologize, I'm going to have to leave, but I appreciate what the staff are telling us. And you're absolutely correct, it's not up to them to suggest the rules. But it certainly is up to this committee, I think, in light of what we've heard, to send a message back to the Board of Internal Economy that there are problems, that there is misuse.

Quite frankly, I take offence at saying well, it's misuse if the cost is significant, but if it's just 82¢ per kilo, then it's not really all that important. I think it is important. I think whether we're misusing what was intended to be an opportunity for members of all parties to communicate and to put out substantive issues.... Mr. Breitreuz, for example, sends out reams and reams of information on gun control. It's very clearly stated; it's well written; it's appropriate. I don't necessarily agree, but he states his view, and I think that's appropriate. If he wants to use ten percenters for that purpose, then so be it.

But what I've seen happening and what I think we're continuing to see is that we've changed. It's no longer just information being passed out by Mr. Layton or Mr. Breitreuz or whoever of a general nature talking about party policy, but it has become now a blatant misuse, I think, of taxpayers' dollars, because it's become campaigning. It has become insults back and forth. As I say, when we have party logos and mail-back, it's a way of canvassing and campaigning on the taxpayers' dollars, and I think we need to significantly tighten the rules. It's more than just whether we put it in a franked envelope or whether we put it in bulk mail. I'm concerned about the content as well as the way in which it's distributed.

Mr. Chair, if we're making recommendations to the Board of Internal Economy, then I think we need to very significantly change the guidelines and the rules. We may not be eliminating it entirely, but I think there are some good examples, people who are using it appropriately in the spirit in which it was intended, and there are other cases where I just think it's absolute trash and garbage and it has to be stopped, because it is a waste of taxpayers' dollars.

The Chair: Okay, well, perhaps once we finish with the witnesses we have before us, we can start going through recommendations, if we want to make some—

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Chair, I have a question for the witness.

The Chair: Oh yes, yes, I'm not finished, I'm just indicating to Madam Longfield that we.... As a matter of fact, there are two more MPs who've asked for questions—speaking of whom, Madam Davies, you're next.

Ms. Libby Davies: Well, first of all, thank you for coming. I think you have a tough job administering these rules, especially in these times when both the volume and the rhetoric have gone up.

The question I have, though, is this: am I correct in saying that there's no different rule if you're mailing into another riding; i.e., the rules apply uniformly whether you're doing a ten percenter in your own riding or whether you're going somewhere in completely the opposite end of the country?

• (1205)

Mr. Louis Bard: You're absolutely correct.

Ms. Libby Davies: Okay, because I just wonder if that's also an issue. These rules just apply everywhere in the same way, and it may well be that there has to be some differentiation between doing a mailing in your own riding, where presumably people know who you are, and doing a mailing somewhere else and it's coming from a central processing place.

I only just sort of twigged to that, that there's no differentiation—

Mr. Louis Bard: A ten percenter is a ten percenter.

Ms. Libby Davies: A ten percenter is a ten percenter, and maybe that's something worth reviewing in terms of whether we need to further delineate how these mailings are used.

I guess just in a general way, I think there has been an increase in the number of complaints, and maybe that is because we're in this different political situation. I personally don't have a problem with the idea that we all want to get information out there, and you know, it's going to be partisan. That's the nature of our work. We just need to be honest about recognizing that. But I think we do need to have some boundaries.

I think it's really problematic when there's an attack made on a sitting member and, worse, when the information is incorrect. That does a lot of damage. So we do need to have some checks and balances here, and if the board does take this up in a broader way, maybe that would be a timely thing at this point.

But there are certainly some problems here.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Any reaction?

Mr. Roy.

[*English*]

Mr. Michel Roy: I'd just like to add, Madam Davies, that the same rules also apply to householders. The only difference is that householders can be mailed only in your riding.

Ms. Libby Davies: Right, yes.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Boivin, please.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I agree with Ms. Davies. It's important to understand that there is a difference, in my opinion, between partisan material and what is becoming very close to resembling slander—in other words, extremely offensive comments made about others. If the New Democratic Party wants to come into Gatineau and tell people what the NDP is suggesting in the way of certain policies and talk about all the good things it's done, well, that's part of the game. That is not really what bothers me; rather, it's the kind of comments that are made in this printed material, by all parties.

The costs may not be a significant issue for some people. But if we're using this tool for advertising purposes, as dubious as that advertising may be, when in fact we're supposed to be informing the citizenry, I for one would be very interested in knowing what the costs are. Since you're with us today—and I want to thank you for being here—could you tell us that costs have been associated with these mailings since the beginning of the 38th Parliament—in other words, ten percenters, and bulk unaddressed mailings for all parties? I would like you to provide me with the numbers as to how much the Bloc québécois, the NDP, the Liberal Party of Canada and the Conservative Party of Canada have spent in that regard. Do these statistics exist? I'm talking about all the costs relating to franking, printing, etc.

Mr. Louis Bard: We are aware of the costs, of course. For a ten percenter, for example, we know that it costs between 1¢ and 2¢ to print one page. In the past, we have always informed each political party of how much it is spending. I have been working at the House of Commons for 13 years, and I've never been asked for costing for all parties. On the other hand, we can provide you with information with respect to the specific costs you're interested in, and so on.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Yes, that's what I'm asking.

Mr. Louis Bard: As you know, everything we do for a Member of Parliament is recorded.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: So, it is possible to provide...

Mr. Louis Bard: I would have to receive a request from the Committee with a very clear indication of how you want the information to be broken down.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Fine, thank you.

The Chair: It's important to remember that some of these rules are not of our own making; they are the rules put in place by the Board of Internal Economy. For example, the rule relating to disclosure of operating costs is a rule put in place by the Board of Internal Economy. In my opinion, the Committee should be asking the Board of Internal Economy to provide that information. The threshold is not the same here as it is for other kinds of work we do. The fact is that I was a member of the Board of Internal Economy for a long time and I know that those are the rules. For example, every month or every year—I'm not exactly sure—the rules are laid out with respect to spending by each Member of Parliament, and so on. I provide that information to my colleagues. A parliamentary committee cannot ask for that information some House of Commons staff. The request has to be made to the Board of Internal Economy.

• (1210)

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Well, whatever the process, I wanted to know whether that information was available. And the answer is yes. The process for obtaining it is another matter. My comment followed up on what Mr. Reynolds said in terms of having a central point. He wanted to know whether that represented a considerable cost for Canadian taxpayers. I, too, would be very interested in knowing how much taxpayers are being made to pay for this extremely politicized exercise.

The Chair: Thank you.

I simply wanted colleagues to know what the proper mechanism is for obtaining such information.

Ms. Guay, please.

Ms. Monique Guay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to ask a couple of technical questions. I do not agree that ten percenters should contain no partisan material, because that is part of political life. If it were prohibited in a ten percenter to present our opinions or say anything critical, that would be a real shame. In that case, there would be no point in using ten percenters.

But from a technical standpoint, there is a particular process to follow when preparing a ten percenter for you to mail out. Have you ever had to refuse someone because the format was not consistent with the rules or because the content might have been...?

Mr. Louis Bard: Yes, it happens regularly. Such cases do arise. I would not say it happens often—MPs know the rules—but there are cases where, in our opinion, the format use is not the proper one. Where it involves the format, the situation is clear. However if 50 per cent of the content is not different, that's another matter.

Most of the time, MPs send several at a time, not just one. They may send three, five or ten over a given period. In all those cases, we do carry out the appropriate follow-up with the MP's office. Most of

the time, the MP cooperates, and is even pleased that the problems have been brought to his attention.

When we have a more difficult case that we are unable to handle appropriately with the MP, we ask Legal Services to help us resolve the matter. It would certainly be difficult to say that everything is always perfect.

Ms. Monique Guay: No, I'm not in any way passing judgment.

Mr. Louis Bard: We do the very best we can, always with a view to providing good service to Members of Parliament.

Ms. Monique Guay: You have a procedure.

Mr. Louis Bard: Yes, a very detailed one.

Ms. Monique Guay: You know the rules and you apply them. So, there is a process. I once had a mailing send back to me because of the 50 per cent different content rule. I was asked to make certain changes and that was perfectly appropriate, because my assistant had made a mistake. That does happen.

The protection for us is the fact that you follow the rules that we have already put in place. As you say, it happens regularly that you return material to Members of Parliament. That's all I want to know.

The point I really wanted to emphasize was the need for a process. Everything has to rely on a system, and people are working to ensure that standards are met: the name of the Member of Parliament, and so on. That satisfies me, because thus far, we have received excellent service and this allows us to keep our constituents informed.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Guay.

Ms. Picard.

Ms. Pauline Picard: I want to come back to the mailing Ms. Boivin received from Mr. Duceppe. I know that mailing was prepared in accordance with the rules governing bulk ten percenters, which are authorized by the whip's office.

You approved that mailing, which was done according to the rules. That's why it was done. I wanted that to be clarified.

When the mailing comes through you, that means that it is consistent with the rules for bulk ten percenters, which go through the whip's office.

• (1215)

Mr. Louis Bard: Yes. You're absolutely right.

Mr. Reynolds made a comment about that at the beginning of his presentation, when he said that everyone is working on the basis of established rules. I fully agree with that.

I would repeat, however, that we obviously cannot take a position on how broadly the term "partisan" should be interpreted. And clearly, we are not 100 per cent infallible. However, the concept is still yielding very good results.

Ms. Pauline Picard: You stated earlier that the ten percenter rule relates to public affairs and partisan affairs.

Mr. Louis Bard: Yes.

Ms. Pauline Picard: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: I want to thank you very much for your participation. I know you were a little taken aback by our putting questions to you point-blank. Thank you for taking the time to help us gain a better understanding of the system. The question is not whether you are applying the rules properly, but whether we like those rules as they now stand. That is something we and our colleagues will be making a decision on.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Louis Bard: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: We have one witness still to hear.

In order to be able to provide instructions to our staff, would you like the Committee to meet briefly now *in camera*? We need to determine whether we agree on certain ideas, because we may have to prepare a report. Otherwise, would you prefer to wait to have heard the next witness, before we hold our *in camera* session?

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Yes, I think that would be better.

The Chair: You think it would be better to wait until we've heard from the next witness? Okay.

In that case, we have completed today's agenda. I want to let colleagues know that I intend to come back on Tuesday with a draft report—if I can call it that—with respect to electoral reform. We will make one more attempt to submit a report to the House, one way or the other.

So, on Thursday of next week, we will return to the issue we discussed today. M. Mark Holland will be appearing as a witness at that time.

Would someone like to move adjournment?

Adjournment has been moved by Ms. Picard.

The meeting is adjourned.

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