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Chair

The Honourable Roger Gallaway

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.)): Good afternoon.

Colleagues, today the intention was that we would proceed to clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-3, which was referred to us on October 18 by the House. We've had two meetings with respect to this bill, and at the eleventh hour some concerns were raised, particularly by the Government of Nunavut. I believe the clerk received today, by fax, a letter from the Assistant Deputy Minister of Transportation in the Department of Economic Development and Transportation in the Government of Nunavut. It briefly makes a request for them to appear before this committee, or at least that this committee examine the issues that the Government of Nunavut has raised. That's item one.

Item two is that Ms. Desjarlais, as a result of the Tuesday meeting, wishes to present to this committee some amendments to Bill C-3, but because of the lack of legislative counsel, she has experienced some difficulty having some amendments drafted. Now, we have to be understanding about this. There is quite simply a dearth of legislative counsel, and it's difficult to have amendments, even simple amendments, drawn up in a timely fashion.

So on the first item I raised, the letter from the Government of Nunavut, I look to you for some direction as to how you would like to proceed with the request laid out in the letter, which I understand the clerk has given to everyone.

Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): If I may, sir, with all due respect to all the folks who want to make presentations to us, this is something that's been going on for four or five weeks. Everybody who wanted to make amendments should have given us the courtesy of sending us letters at least a week in advance, not dated December 1, and November 30. I think that's very disrespectful to this committee. Although we'd like to hear their concerns, I think people who wanted to make presentations should have respected our time as well as everybody's time and sent them to us in due time.

I asked colleagues around the table...we should have had ample opportunity. I know our colleague from the NDP, Ms. Desjarlais, said on Tuesday when we left here that we were going to be getting them in plenty of time, and we were supposed to.... Well, we can check *Hansard*, definitely.

I think the spirit was that we were going to get them within 24 hours yesterday. I asked Ms. Desjarlais yesterday if something like this was going to be received. If we don't receive them in our offices with enough time to do any amendments, I don't think that is fair. It's certainly not in the spirit of fair play, and I don't think a lot of us respect that.

The Chair: All right.

Now I want to get to Ms. Desjarlais. I want to also acknowledge that the letter received this morning by our clerk is in English only. It arrived just prior to noon, so it hasn't been translated.

Madam St-Hilaire.

• (1535)

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Chairman, pursuant to the rules of procedure that we agreed to as a committee, all documents submitted must be translated. I'm somewhat astonished. However, this would be a wonderful opportunity, would you not agree, to hear from the people of Nunavut.

Next time, I would ask that you not hand out to other committee members documents that have not been translated, so as not to penalize those who do not understand the other language.

I'd like us to invite the people of Nunavut to appear so that we can put some questions to them. This would give NDP members an opportunity to propose some amendments. I don't have a problem with that.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Desjarlais.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): This is just a comment to the committee about what I indicated on Tuesday, and I'm not trying to mince words. In an effort for us to proceed with this bill, I had concerns over the last batch of witnesses and I had concerns over some clauses. I suggested I might have amendments I wanted to talk to my environmental critic about. I gave a very heads-up approach to that. We have not had a lot of time to deal with this bill, with all due respect, so for people who didn't know we were dealing with it and now have concerns, there's nothing so pressing on our business agenda that we can't hear from others as they come forward.

With regard to the amendments, though, I did try to get them done, Mr. Chair. I had every intention of getting them to the committee ahead of time but I was not able to do that. I notified the clerk that we would get them to him as soon as they were done and we had them. My intention was to try to get them, but in all reasonableness, we had just heard from witnesses, and to somehow give someone one or two days to prepare results in order to go to clause-by-clause is out of the ordinary. I accepted that I would try to do that, but I was not able to do it; it was out of no show of disrespect to the committee.

I just want to make it clear that in the future, if this is the reaction that's going to take place when someone isn't able to get something done when they're trying to do something so they can speed up the process, don't expect my agreement to ever hurry anything through again.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Nicholson.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): I just want to tell Ms. Desjarlais, you don't have a problem at this end of the table. I just wanted you to know that, because I'm willing to guess your party may be somewhat similar to ours. You probably don't have about 300 people who are preparing all your amendments here and translating them and that sort of thing.

Like everybody, I'm here and I would have been prepared to move ahead, but we do have this request from the assistant deputy minister of Nunavut. It just came in this afternoon, so in fairness to everyone, I think it has to be translated. I can't see how Madame St-Hilaire or anybody else who wants to see it in both official languages can consider this request unless they have it translated, so we'll have to do that.

Inasmuch as it looks as if we probably aren't going to get through this clause-by-clause today, I think we should invite the assistant deputy minister of the territories. I say to my colleagues in the Liberal Party, I don't think anything here is particularly pressing; most of this is confirming something that was done last December, so it can wait another couple of weeks. I think it would be fair to my colleagues, and I would really like to see what the members of the New Democratic Party have to say on this. If there is some concern on the part of the Government of Nunavut, we should hear it and we should allow this to be translated, because I think that's the fair way to conduct the business of this committee.

Those are my comments.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nicholson.

Mr. Karygiannis again.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Thank you, Ms. Desjarlais, for bringing that up.

However, if more time is required, may I suggest that a reasonable length of time be asked by anybody who wants to make submissions so that we're not, at the end of the day...if you want, you can call it "bushwhacked". If you had wanted another week, certainly I don't think there would have been any difficulty from this side of the table if you'd said, listen, I need a week to get this to you. I think you

would have found agreement from this side. It's in the spirit of all of us trying to work forward.

But say somebody says, listen, I'm going to get it to you in 24 hours. Then I think we're all credible individuals and we should at least try to adhere to that, but coming at five minutes to? If more time is required, by all means, I think we should ask for that and be specific and say, listen, I need two weeks.

● (1540)

The Chair: Mr. Gouk.

Mr. Jim Gouk (British Columbia Southern Interior, CPC): I'm looking at this from two points of view, and I'd like to get one side on record. I'm concerned that in the case that has already been raised here today, this bill has been out for six weeks, and we don't want to establish a precedent where people are going to ignore it until the very last minute and then think we're going to stop everything.

However, that having been said, I haven't heard from anyone who is pressing to get this thing through, saying it needs to be implemented to get something people are desperately waiting on. Under those circumstances and given that it's a territorial government that is asking for this consideration, I understand the situation Ms. Desjarlais is in. We want to keep cooperation in this committee amongst all of us. We're in a minority government and we rely on the cooperation of one another. I think it behooves us to go, if not an extra mile, at least a couple of extra yards to try to accommodate something like this when it occurs.

The Chair: Thank you.

Let me summarize where we're at, then. We are going to wait until Tuesday.

Mr. Jim Gouk: Could we maybe give the clerk instructions to contact the party?

The Chair: Exactly. That's what I was going to do.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: If they could be here on Tuesday, wonderful. If they want to wait till Thursday, then let's do it Thursday.

The Chair: That would be fine. Nunavut is a few miles from here, but there are direct flights.

Secondly, that also gives Ms. Desjarlais time to prepare her amendments.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Just as a point of clarification, are the amendments ready?

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: They're ready now, but there's not enough time for anyone else to check into them.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I'm just asking this: when is a good time for us to say, if they're ready now, can we have them by Monday, let's say, or a certain time?

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: You can have them at the end of this meeting. You could have them now, but you wouldn't have time to go through them and all.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: If you have a staff member with you, can you at least distribute them to us so there's no misunderstanding and we don't say they were not received?

The Chair: I think we're getting into something that's premature, because there may be other matters raised by the Government of Nunavut.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: Good point.

The Chair: There is an infinite number of possibilities now. There may be matters that will address concerns Ms. Desjarlais has. I think we're getting beyond the witness list into amendments, and that's premature.

So we will make an assumption that the Government of Nunavut might be here—boy, that's really a lot of applications of the subjunctive—on Tuesday, but if it's the worst-case scenario, it will be Thursday.

We have before us officials from the department, whom I do not need to introduce because they've been here previously on this bill. Does anyone, before I end this part of this meeting and we move on to the next part, have any questions of them with respect to matters that have been raised, particularly at the last meeting?

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: Are you talking specifically on this bill or in general terms?

The Chair: I'm sorry; on this bill, yes.

No?

Well, I will thank you for coming. I will apologize—it's not confusion; it's just the push and pull of parliamentary committees, and I'm sure you understand that—and say to you, thank you for coming and we will see you soon. I'm not certain what day that will be or what that means. Thank you.

Now I believe Madame St-Hilaire has a matter to raise.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As far as future business is concerned, in deference to the vote on Mirabel that was held in the House of Commons and, prior to that, here in committee, I'm wondering if it might not be a good idea to continue the debate on the democratic deficit. The Standing Committee on Transport could put questions to the ADM officials, to members of the 11,000 acres committee, to the expropriated Mirabel landowners and perhaps to the Minister of Transport, in deference to the decision in the House of Commons to devise a solution to the problem. It doesn't look like the Minister is about to come up with a solution of any kind. In my opinion, the committee should summon these witnesses.

• (1545)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Gouk, I believe, is next.

Mr. Jim Gouk: Mine is with regard to the flight attendant situation. I wonder if the clerk could tell us what the situation is with regard to getting those three documents we need. Do you have them?

Thanks for those.

The Chair: Ms. St-Hilaire has raised a matter under the heading of future business. It's a very specific issue, and I was going to suggest that we need to have a conversation about what I will call the new year's future business, because it's very clear that we're not

going to be having any legislation. There are a number of issues I think we need to turn our minds to and turn the attention of this committee to.

Ms. Desjarlais, you wanted to say something?

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: In regard to the documents, is every member of the committee getting a copy of those documents?

The Chair: Yes, you will receive them. The clerk will make copies.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Chairman, I want to have a clear understanding of your response, or non-response, to my request. Will the committee invite these individuals? In my view, we can do that. After all, we still have two weeks of work ahead of us.

ADM officials will be keen on addressing the committee. Farmers and expropriated Mirabel landowners will be very happy to voice their concerns to the Transport Committee. I think we need to follow up on the vote that was taken. It's the least we can do as parliamentarians.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Karygiannis.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

At the end of the last committee we had an opportunity to discuss future business, and one of the things we certainly discussed was hours of operation of truckers. We also said that was more important than the rent at the airports, one of the things everybody was very eager about since we asked for a moratorium on rents until we'd had an opportunity to examine this.

Now, I'm just wondering if we are going through a different process. In the spirit of cooperation, would we agree that if the chair—we only have two weeks left—through the clerk and facilities...we'll certainly entertain...? We have next week, when we're going to have to deal with Bill C-3; it depends on what comes. However, we did prioritize that we would call truckers and the truckers' association in order for them to give us their viewpoint. We have holidays coming up and certainly everybody wants to make sure we have a safe season, and this was agreed upon.

The Chair: Ms. Desjarlais.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: This is on both issues. If I heard the minister correctly in the House today on the truckers' hours—and I'll review *Hansard*—I was given the impression that he was not supportive of an increase and that the 13 and 14 hours were going to stay in place. That being the case, that changes the emergency for us in dealing with the truckers' hours of service. If it is still an issue, then I agree with Mr. Karygiannis that we need to deal with it, but I'm trusting the minister's comments today in the House as being accurate and valid.

I do think the situation with Mirabel, because of the vote in the House, is a new addition we didn't know about. As a result, as Madam St-Hilaire has mentioned, out of absolute respect for the process and for those parties involved, we should make an effort to try to hear from them.

The Chair: Mr. Nicholson, and then we'll move on.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

This is perhaps an item that could be discussed and worked out at the steering committee, but for my money, I do want to say that Madame St-Hilaire has raised a very important point. I think we're under an obligation to follow up on this inasmuch as there was a six-to-one vote within this committee in favour of trying to redress the wrong that took place at Mirabel and in view of the resolution that was passed by the House. It seems to me we are under an obligation to follow up on this, and I certainly would like to see us follow up on this. But rather than try to sort it out as to who and where and when, I'd make the suggestion that you, Mr. Chair, could get together with the steering committee and put it together.

I would certainly like to be on record as saying it's an excellent suggestion; I quite think we have an obligation. Once the committee has taken a stand on something like that, as we overwhelmingly have, and now that the House has also backed us up, I don't think it's something we can ignore.

• (1550)

The Chair: Final comment, Mr. Scarpaleggia.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Chair, given that the leases are the responsibility of the airport authority and given that we will be discussing airport governance in the near

future, perhaps we could have the two parties involved come within the context of those discussions.

The Chair: All right.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I have one more point, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: There's always one more point.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: I think the minister today said that 18 hours was not on the table, but I don't think there was a clear indication of 13, 14, or 16.

The Chair: He did say the 13 and 14, and I agree with comments made on the hours of service for truck drivers; that seems to be moving towards a very quick resolution and settlement. That's number one.

Number two, with regard to the motion that was passed at the last meeting with respect to airport rents, we haven't dealt with it but we've expressed an opinion of this committee, and a letter is going to be sent to the minister with a copy of that motion.

Might I suggest that we adjourn in a moment, that this meeting end, and that the steering committee perhaps stay for about fifteen minutes? We will deal with it now and we will present a plan on Tuesday for the full committee. We will deal with the Mirabel issue and we will deal with what I call the new year's business as to what we're going to do. Is that agreeable?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The steering committee will be in camera.

This meeting is adjourned.

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