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## **Legislative Committee on Bill C-30**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Monday, January 29, 2007**

**Chair**

**Mr. Laurie Hawn**

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## Legislative Committee on Bill C-30

Monday, January 29, 2007

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC)):** We have a quorum. I'd like to call to order meeting number two of the special legislative committee on Bill C-30.

My military mind likes to start things on time, so I appreciate everybody being here. I hope we can continue to do that. We have a lot of work ahead of us, so it's important that we start on time and get to it.

I'd just ask the media to clear the room.

I want to welcome everybody back. I hope everybody had a good break at Christmas—and the word “break” is in italics, because everybody worked pretty hard over Christmas. I know I did; I'm sure you all did too. I hope everybody's ready to work hard, because Canadians are watching us and they're wanting to see some progress on what's an important issue for all of us.

I'd like to put out a plea to everybody on all sides that this is not question period. I know it's naive to say let's park the partisan politics, but let's do that as much as we can and work in a spirit of cooperation, because this is obviously an important issue for all Canadians and all parties in the House.

We want to go back to the House with a good quality product in a good timeframe—that will be up to members of the committee—so we can take back to the House and ultimately the Canadian people something that will make a difference for Canada, for the world, for our children and our grandchildren. It will probably always be a work in progress, but the key word is “progress”, and that's what we're here to initiate.

I'm looking forward to the task in a spirit of cooperation. I'm sure everybody here is as well, and we'll press on with the agenda.

Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

In the spirit of your comments about moving with some haste, I asked my staff to gather the testimony from witnesses this committee and the committee in the previous Parliament heard on the specific topic of climate change and Canada's role in climate change. What you see in front of me is that information. Much of the testimony is extremely relevant to what we're talking about today. It's obviously a very wide view of the issues. I know the earnestness of committee members from all parties around the table to be aware of what we've already heard, and to not repeat information. As diligent committee

members, I think it's incumbent upon us to be aware of what's already been done.

I will submit this to the clerk's desk. There has been a suggestion, and I take it well, that we'll place this all on CD so we won't have to create so much paper.

I think it's of note and importance to realize that for more than two and a half years committees have been studying this specific topic we are embarking on right now. We've spent much of our time and much of taxpayers' time delving into the issue, into the answers and solutions, and those are at our fingertips, literally, for the committee to choose from. So I submit this for the clerk's privilege.

**The Chair:** I would ask you to perhaps put that in the form of a motion so we can get it condensed into CD and pass it out and so on. I'm sure it will be unanimous, but I'd request that you put it in the form of a motion.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Absolutely. Would you like that motion now, Chair?

**The Chair:** Please.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I move that the committee accept the testimony from witnesses that has previously been viewed both here at the environment committee and also at the natural resources committee. They have also spent time on this very subject. That is my motion.

• (1535)

**The Chair:** No discussion?

Mr. Warawa.

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think it's a very good idea and I thank Mr. Cullen for suggesting it. I just want clarification. Are we talking about Bill C-288 or are we just talking about the last Parliament?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Chair, if I may, there are three main pieces: one is from the natural resources committee that specifically looked at climate change in Canada; the second is testimony on Bill C-288, which we most recently looked at over approximately a five-week period; and the third and most substantial set is what the committee in the 38th Parliament looked at for some number of months, six months or more—it's the witnesses' testimony and some of the information they submitted to the committee.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Okay. There was a minority report also as part of that report. Is that part of it?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I'm unsure of that, Chair. We can certainly make it part of the committee's final report.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** So will it be part of it—the minority report?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I don't see why not; it's rather small.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Thank you. I support that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen, as stated, the clerk does not have that motion in front of him, in writing. Is it possible to scribble it out while a couple more people make comments?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** We'll dash something out for the committee to see in writing, if that would help the clerk.

**The Chair:** Yes.

Mr. Godfrey.

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** I just want to make sure that in fact we're discussing two different motions. This is one motion, and then there's a second one that deals with a potential steering committee. I assume we're not voting or discussing that now.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Chair, to be clear, my staff are just reminding me that the motion is in front of the committee. There are two separate motions here. That's correct. Sorry.

**The Chair:** This one talks about Bill C-288, not the natural resources part.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Right.

If I can make an amendment to that motion, it would be just simply to include the natural resources testimony as well. It's completely relevant to the topic, and important. If that amendment is required, then I make it and the motion stands as viewed.

**The Chair:** Okay.

As a question for clarification, Mr. Cullen, the natural resources committee studied the oil sands as well. What timeframe are we talking about?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I believe it was the 38th Parliament, Chair.

**The Chair:** It was before the industry committee. Or was it industry and natural resources?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** The Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

**The Chair:** The clerk is just going to check something for clarification.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** What we can do is pass the original motion and clarify what natural resources testimony is there, if that would

make it easier for committee members, and then suggest a second motion.

Clearly the point of this is to have as much information in committee members' hands as possible, and to realize the path already walked.

**The Chair:** We'll just let the clerk clarify here for a second.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Is there any further discussion?

Mr. Jean.

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

I support Mr. Cullen's motion, but I'm wondering if we couldn't just do it in the one motion that's before us by putting in “that all the submissions and the reports from the natural resources, industry, and environment committees' study of the Kyoto Protocol,” etc.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I appreciate the attempt at clarification, but it might muddy the waters a bit.

The clerk has the motion as amended. Perhaps he can read that and we can vote on it and get on with it.

**The Chair:** We'll take an intervention from Mr. Bigras, and then we'll re-read the motion.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

To begin with, let me say that I welcome this motion. I think that it is an excellent idea.

Mr. Cullen told us that its purpose is to allow us to obtain more information. We should then be able to make better decisions by taking into account the work done by the Standing Committee on the Environment. On the other hand, I want to be clear about the intent of the motion. In fact, we were told that we should avoid doing work that has already been done.

I want Mr. Cullen to assure us that this will not prevent certain witnesses who already appeared before other committees regarding the Kyoto Protocol from appearing before this committee and presenting briefs on Bill C-30. If we are sure of this, we will support our colleague's motion.

● (1540)

[English]

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** It's not an exclusionary list. It's intended for the committee's information, to aid us in our deliberations, nothing more.

**The Chair:** It's a matter of public record in any event, so committee members would be able to use it, or not, as they see fit.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Correct.

**The Chair:** We'll just get the clerk to re-read the motion.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Chad Mariage):** The motion is:

That all submissions and reports from the Environment Committee's study on the Kyoto Protocol in the 38th Parliament, the reports and submissions from the Environment Committee's study of Bill C-288, and the submissions from the Natural Resources Committee study on the oil sands in 39-1 be tabled as evidence for the study on Bill C-30.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** As far as the rest of the business is concerned, we have an order of business here. Does the committee want to proceed in that order, or do we want to take some of what might be the easier ones first?

Just as a suggestion, it was put to me by a number of people that the selection of witnesses might better be left to the end because it may take a little bit longer.

Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I'm not so much concerned about whether we take the schedule of meetings, although we have some proposals for that. For the witnesses, perhaps it is to identify a process that's going to be effective. Is it simply going down the witness list and voting on each one? There are concerns about an exaggeration of time for this.

**The Chair:** Mr. Warawa.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Thank you, Chair.

If there is an appetite to have a steering committee look at the witness list, then I'd suggest that we determine whether or not there's going to be a steering committee. If there is, then we don't have to go to the list. If there's not, at that time we would go to the list. So I'd suggest that we maybe look at our schedule, because if there's going to be a steering committee, that could be at the end.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Monsieur Bigras.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Before going on to the following points on the agenda, namely choosing witnesses, the schedule of meetings and the notice of motion, and even before we vote on the motion regarding the creation of a steering committee, it may be useful to hold a more general debate, albeit concise, on the spirit in which we intend to work. I think that if we proceed too quickly with choosing witnesses, we might not cover the ground properly.

If, ultimately, we are not satisfied with the orientation of the committee or if we have difficulty establishing a procedure to follow, we could envisage creating a steering committee. In any case, we should discuss this before raising issues like the selection of witnesses or the schedule for the meetings.

[English]

**The Chair:** What I'm hearing is that Monsieur Bigras would like to discuss the schedule of meetings and sort of work towards a timeframe. Is that what you're suggesting?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I get a sense that Mr. Bigras wants to have a larger discussion. I would support such a thing, as long as we're

focused and we move on, beyond that, to the actual choices we're making today.

**The Chair:** Do you mean a discussion in terms of setting our own timeframe and deadline? Is that what we're talking about? Or am I missing that?

In terms of objectives, Mr. Bigras, are we talking about the timeframe? Is that what you're looking at getting into? The spirit of the work is, I hope, a spirit, ultimately, of cooperation. We're going to get to clause-by-clause, of course, and see what comes out at the other end. Is that what you're getting at? Or am I missing something?

• (1545)

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Chairman, we cannot discuss the selection of witnesses if we have not previously decided how to orient our work. We could very well discuss whether we should study the bill during one month or five months, but these are technical elements, and although they are important, they must be based on a consensus within the committee on the tenor of our debate. For instance, if we decide to spend a month studying this bill, it means that we want to apply certain principles. I think that we must discuss this issue.

I do not know what my Liberal colleagues think of this.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Godfrey.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** I think what Mr. Bigras is getting at is that if we're going to have a cooperative arrangement where we try to work together to advance the cause of the environment, both on fighting climate change and on fighting pollution, what we need to know before we can get into it is, for example, the intention of the government. That is to say, if they have withdrawn this bill or said it's all up for discussion, we need to know what parts of it they're going to change. We need to know what their plan is, both on the climate side and on every other side, and how that fits in with the legislation. It must be the case, by the fact that they have turned it over to this committee, that they are unsatisfied with the original draft. Otherwise, they wouldn't have turned it back to the committee. They have asked us to rewrite.

Before we can do that, we need to know what their dissatisfactions are about and what concessions and concerns they have so we then may know when to devote our time to issues on which there's going to be genuine disagreement. If it turns out that there is agreement on points, we don't need to have so many witnesses; we don't need to go on about them so long. But we really can't go on a fishing expedition trying to guess by putting up motions and asking where you are on this without knowing the plans of the government.

**The Chair:** Mr. Warawa.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The government believes Bill C-30 is a very good piece of legislation. Bill C-2 went to a legislative committee, and Bill C-30 has now been sent to a legislative committee. We are open to input on how to make it better. Many of the opposition members have clearly said they would like to have an opportunity to make Bill C-30 better and that's why it's at committee.

We began the meeting with comments that many have already been down this path and have received information from witnesses. Therefore, Mr. Cullen presented a motion to have previous witness testimony and discussion included at this committee. I think that was a good choice. I don't think we need to spend hours, weeks, or months going over new testimony when we've already heard relevant testimony.

What I'm looking forward to is working together with other members of the committee and hearing their recommendations on how we can move forward. I'm hoping we can move this forward quickly. I'm hoping we meet as often as necessary so that we can have this dealt with and maybe do clause-by-clause within a few weeks.

As I've said from the outset, this is not here for a rewrite, it's here to be strengthened. We look forward to input from select witnesses and also members of the committee. If we need to make it stronger, then we're open to that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Jean.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I was going to mention pretty much what Mr. Warawa said, except of course that we went a full 17 minutes without any partisan shot, until the Liberals.

We are looking to cooperate and do what's necessary to make this a much better piece of legislation, for the safety and security of Canadians' health. That's what's important to this government.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** I suspect I will do this fairly often during the proceedings, but I would appreciate no partisan shots. I know that's probably unrealistic, but keep trying—all sides.

Mr. Scarpaleggia.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** I agree with you, Mr. Chair. I think we have to rise above partisan differences.

I may be touching on Mr. Bigras' and Mr. Godfrey's point, but I think we will have philosophical differences. We have to do the philosophical groundwork, and we have to adopt a thematic approach, such as what is proposed here. I don't think we can dive right into the nuts and bolts. This bill was referred to us before second reading because there are philosophical issues and issues of principle. We should take a philosophical and thematic approach at the beginning, and then we'll get into the nuts and bolts.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Bigras.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** The government made a proposal. The spirit in which we want to work in this committee consists in finding a balance between the urgent need to take action, while ensuring that we have every means at our disposal to combat climate change, and the transparency and openness that we need to hear as many

witnesses as possible. This is what I meant regarding the approach that we should choose.

As far as we are concerned, we agree that we must use every means at our disposal. This must be done within a limited period of time, and not in the medium term. We must act quickly, but even if we have all the testimony from the Standing Committee on the Environment and the Committee on Natural Resources, our task consists in hearing a series of witnesses regarding Bill C-30. In my opinion, this is the balance that we must seek to establish between the urgency of acting in the face of climate change on the one hand, and transparency on the other hand. Our selection of witnesses and our choice of dates for the meetings should be based on these principles.

We did not have an opportunity to debate this bill in the House of Commons. Therefore, we must make sure that we can get the work done in this committee.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Warawa.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Bigras mentioned that we have a duty to hear from witnesses. I agree, but we can also look at that in a very effective way. To bring clarity, I would suggest that one of those first witnesses could be the minister himself, and then people from the department. We can ask them why Bill C-30 was drafted the way it was. That would get us off to a fairly quick start.

The minister has made it clear that he's available when the committee would like him to come, and he's looking forward to coming here at an early opportunity. So we could start with the minister; it could be this week. As I said previously, I'm willing to work as hard and as long as is necessary to see this not in a prolonged process but in a very effective and speedy process. Canadians are asking for a quick resolution to this. There's an urgency on this file. Many of us around this table have shared the urgency of dealing with the environmental file.

I hope Mr. Bigras is not suggesting a long and protracted process, but a very effective and efficient and quick process.

A question to you, through the chair, Mr. Bigras: would you like to have a quick or a long process?

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** I think that as we study this bill we can limit the time we take while hearing as many witnesses as possible. That, in my view, is quite doable. We will see what decision we come up with. However, I would not want this committee's efficiency to be judged simply on the minister's presentation and the testimony of officials before the committee. I think we must broaden the process. We are in a position to do it.

We are just starting this parliamentary session, and we have lot of energy. If necessary, we can hold more intensive hearings. I believe that we can conclude our study of the bill fairly quickly, and demonstrate transparency by hearing as many witnesses as possible.

This bill has not been debated in the House of Commons. Of course, as Mr. Cullen said earlier, we could use previous testimony for information purposes. However, I would not want that existing testimony to prevent us from inviting important witnesses to appear in the context of our study of Bill C-30.

● (1555)

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Manning.

**Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To deal with our witness list, which is long—and it seems as if we have a possibility of spending a fair bit of time on this piece of legislation—and the fact that Canadians want action as soon as possible and that the House is sitting for the full month of February, it might be in the best interest of all of us to have as many meetings as possible during that time. At the end of February, before we go to our March break, there's a possibility of reassessing, seeing how we're doing on this list of witnesses, seeing how we're doing with regard to moving forward. We're looking at maybe five weeks down the road. We'll propose meetings for a number of days coming up and then we'll see how we're doing.

To sit here now and to think we can answer all those questions that are being laid on the table, with the list that we have here, it's virtually impossible to do—organizing this list and giving our people time to get these witnesses to the table, especially people who are outside the Ottawa area. I think it's important that we set a schedule for meetings, start into our meetings as soon as possible, see how we're doing over a period of time, and maybe reassess before we go to March break to see how we're doing.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll suggest something I think might move us along, which would hopefully be somewhat refreshing.

Every party in this place has identified this committee and this process as most significant. I've heard from all parties now a willingness to do the heavy lifting, to work hard to see as many committee meetings in a week as are necessary. One of the ways we've suggested—and I believe members of the committee all have a proposed workplan that we put forward—was to take six specific topics or themes that we can study. To answer Mr. Manning's concern, I think we can nail down a process that works for this committee.

These are the central themes we've seen come again and again through all the testimony we've heard before. It's effective; it's transparent. It's for the Canadian people to see and judge us by, but we must act as if they were at our very heels on this legislation. We cannot simply sit back and have large philosophical debates about the possibility or the need to act. The need to act is in front of us. The will to act must come from each of us sitting in the chairs around this table.

We have the capacity to call these witnesses and to do a thorough and complete study, and if opposition members and government members have not come forward with prepared amendments or considered amendments, then I simply must beg what we've been doing for the last eight weeks.

Committee members are here to do a job and to get the right job done. Each party has considered this particular issue for a number of years. Clearly our work is in front of us and our opportunity is now. To take that opportunity rather than delay and dither is the only choice available to us.

The proposed work plan, we believe, is a sensible one. It puts out six specific topics and meetings with witnesses who will cover the range of issues dealt with by Bill C-30, including some other options that don't even exist in Bill C-30 right now. It will rewrite this bill to our satisfaction and present it back to the House in a timely fashion.

We believe it's the responsible thing to do.

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

We're just running off copies of that.

I believe it was sent to all committee members previously, but we'll just run off some extra copies so that you can refer to it.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** That's appreciated.

**The Chair:** It's a suggested start point, and we need a suggested start point to leap off from.

Go ahead, Mr. Warawa.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Through you, Mr. Chair, I have a question to Mr. Cullen.

I've looked at your proposed work plan. I think it merits discussion and would ask if you're to the point of wanting to make a motion. Then we could have some discussion. Is that what you're intending?

● (1600)

**The Chair:** First we'll go to Mr. Cullen for your response.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Sure. Obviously there'll have to be a discussion about what we're proposing. We're not proposing it as a *fait accompli*, but as something for us to start with in order to have substantive conversation.

If it's best through a proposed motion, then I'll do that if the committee members want to have some discussion about the format, but clearly we can't leave this meeting room without having decided on a course of action, and this is a proposed course of action.

With your indulgence, Mr. Chair, we'll use whatever format is best.

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

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We've having a ping-pong game here. We're ping-ponging back from one subject to another, Mr. Chair. I want to come back to the comments made by my colleague, Mr. Bigras.

I think everybody at this committee is seized with the importance of trying to come up with an outcome that makes sense for the country. It is facile and it is dismissive to speak of this committee's work as something that can be hurried. Bill C-2 took months of negotiations. Hundreds of amendments were considered. It was an important piece of legislation that passed through all-party support.

No one is trying to delay this. This is the 21st-century challenge of the hugest proportions. Here is our challenge going forward, as I see it, going back to Mr. Bigras's comments: I don't know how this bill fits into the government's plan. I haven't seen a plan. I am still trying to divine a plan.

I'm reminded of Yogi Berra's famous expression that when you come to a fork in the road, take it. I'm just not sure what fork we're supposed to be taking.

I don't know whether this Bill C-30 is in the context of Kyoto, or not in the context of Kyoto. I don't know how this connects to the government's ongoing discussions, for example, on the expansion of the oil sands, if there are such discussions. I don't know how this Bill C-30 fits with the expansion of nuclear power, if there are such plans. For us to assume that it can be hurried through at this level of complexity and to suggest that it might all have been heard before is not necessarily true. It's not right to speak like this.

Canadians know this is the challenge of the 21st century, and they want to see us come up with a reasonable plan that does not force us to commit economic hara-kiri while at the same time achieving our domestic reductions, Mr. Chairman, and participating internationally as good international citizens. So I'd like to have a generalized discussion, to pick up on what our colleague from the Bloc Québécois has put forward,

[Translation]

a general discussion on themes, and on the direction in which we are going. That will not take more than half an hour. The only answer I have heard the government giving in the past 30 minutes is that it expects to make no changes to the bill. I would like the government to say more about its plan.

This is not a question of partisanship. The point is to hear the government talk about its plan, if there is a plan. This is the government's bill. Where are we going with it?

[English]

As my colleague Mr. Godfrey said, if we're going on a high seas fishing expedition and we're going to land any species, I don't think that's the right process.

I'd like to hear from the government on this. How does this fit in? Where is this going? What do you contemplate? When do you intend to regulate? You published a notice of intent to regulate in the fall. I'm sorry, but with all due respect, big deal. Governments do this all the time, at all levels of government.

Where are we going? Where do you see us going? Canadians want to know where we're going. Need I remind you, you're in charge. Where are you taking this nation-state? Are we inside of Kyoto or are we out of Kyoto? These are the kinds of discussions that have to be held before we get into the four corners of this draft statute. Having a discussion about witnesses here or there is not going to

help us achieve what we want to achieve until we get a generalized and more clear understanding of what journey we're on here.

To suggest that it's only the opposition parties who are compelling this debate on Bill C-30 is wrong. It's false. It's not true. Everybody in the House of Commons and all parties want to see this move forward productively. So please help me as a single member of Parliament and help all Canadians understand where we're going. I think that's part of what we ought to be doing before we get into other questions, such as should we have five meetings a week? Should we have 40 or 60 witnesses? Has it been said before elsewhere, in some other committee?

With all due respect, even if it's been said somewhere else in another committee, it may not apply to the context of this bill. That's our job as parliamentarians. As a lawyer I wouldn't do that. Those of us with legal training wouldn't do that. It is against the code of ethics.

So this is my plea: can I please hear something from the government in terms of where this journey is supposed to take us? Where do we contemplate being? Are we working towards budget deadlines? If we are, then say so, for the love of God. Tell the Canadian people where we're going. If you're not able to tell us where we're going, perhaps we should run it back up the flagpole, hear from the minister or the Prime Minister, and find out what the authority of this committee is purported to be.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

•(1605)

**The Chair:** I might stand to be corrected, but I think it was Walt Whitman who said to take the fork in the road. But I won't quibble.

Mr. Godfrey.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** The problem with the NDP model is, frankly, its incompleteness.

Our basic position—and I thought it was the position of all the opposition parties and the NGOs initially—was that this was an unnecessary piece of legislation, and that was why we rejected it. We said we actually had a piece of legislation that could do most of this. It's called the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, and we can regulate under that. Indeed, ironically, the government can still regulate under that without even introducing the new bill, and plans to. The regulations that will be brought in are under the existing Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

When the NDP decided to change tactics and to work with the government, we said all right, we've got to be careful that whatever else we do, we do not weaken the existing legislation, the CEPA legislation, that we at least do no harm.



There are a number of issues that have been identified by the non-governmental organizations very effectively in a submission to us, and it would seem to me that the template that the NGOs have laid out has identified correctly the major concerns that we all felt in the month of October, when we collectively—that is to say the three opposition parties and the NGO community speaking unanimously—had a problem. They now have identified those issues, some of which are not flagged in the work plan. For instance, there is no reference in the work plan to the real difficulty in Bill C-30 regarding provincial equivalency agreements. There is no reference in the work plan to the real challenge of having two sets of lists, the list of toxins under CEPA and a separate list of substances that would be pulled out and identified as pollutants and greenhouse gases. Those are subjects worthy of consideration because they show major flaws in the bill that would weaken the existing CEPA provisions. They need to be dealt with.

Similarly, there is nothing in the NDP template to deal with the challenges of the notice of intent to regulate, which also has been very thoroughly criticized by the non-governmental organizations. We need to see how the notice of intent to regulate will work with the bill, because the real guts of the matter are in the notice of intent to regulate.

All of those things are very well laid out in the NGO submission. I'm not saying that we will endorse every single thing that the NGOs have said in terms of targets or anything else. I will say that I think they have correctly identified the challenges we had with the original draft of the bill, way back when, which all of us agreed on. We would have a fuller discussion of those points—incorporating, by the way, many of the points that are here, but in a fuller fashion—that the NDP has put forward. So I would offer, as an alternative way of dealing with our concerns, the things we all agreed on, which have been very well captured by the January 22 submission of the NGOs, which we could recirculate. You could borrow mine, if that would be helpful.

All I'm saying is we've got to do it seriously. We're not going to take forever on this, but let's organize it in terms of the problems we had with the bill, not in terms of general terminology about international experiences and models. It won't deal with the CEPA preamble. Are we going to make a specific reference to the Kyoto Protocol or not? We all thought we should.

**The Chair:** Mr. Warawa.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to respond to some comments made by Mr. McGuinty.

He used the example of Bill C-2. I think he said that it was months dealing with that, and in actuality it was six weeks. That legislation was ten times the size and complexity of what we are dealing with in Bill C-30. Bill C-30 is a small piece of legislation, and I encourage him to read it. Hopefully he already has. This is an issue that each of us around the table has been dealing with for years. I think each of us knows the issue. Yes, we need to hear from witnesses, but for us to go on for months and months—which is what I'm interpreting is being suggested by Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Godfrey, that we go a long protracted process—is not serving our country well and could be interpreted as stalling. In fact, we need to move forward.

What Mr. Cullen is suggesting here I think is good. We are willing to work as hard and as long as necessary, and if necessary right into our break in March, to move forward. So if we need to spend time—and the timelines being proposed here by Mr. Cullen I think are realistic and good—then we can achieve this. If we need more time, then I'd suggest we go right into and use our break week in March and stay here in Ottawa. What's being proposed is meeting Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and it's laid out here, beginning with the process and witness list, which could be done by steering committee in a very effective way, and then the department officials and the minister or vice versa, which could be switched.

We could be very effective this week, but right now we're experiencing lengthy discussion. Maybe after all those who want to have an opportunity to speak do so, we would also want to consider the length of speaking time, because it appears we're starting to bog down, and that's further evidence to support the need for a steering committee. I'm hoping Mr. Cullen pretty soon will make a motion, if he hasn't yet.

Thank you.

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen, you're next.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I will be moving this as a motion, because certainly Mr. Godfrey has added a couple of things, or so he believes, to this work plan in terms of wanting to hear about equivalency, and there is space even within this work plan to allow for that, so certainly I would expect his support.

Also, the ENGOs, the non-governmental organizations he referred to, sent us all a letter on the 22nd. If I may, I will quote just one small piece from it, Chair:

We believe that all parties understand the need for urgent action on climate and clean air, so the committee should have no need for lengthy debates. A time period on the order of four weeks should be enough to debate the wording of any amendments and to consider C-30 clause by clause.

In an effort to respond to those same groups that Mr. Godfrey and Mr. McGuinty have referred to, we have put forward what we thought was a reasonable work plan. A work plan to get work done, not a series of navel-gazing exercises trying to decipher what possibly the Conservatives were thinking of when they drew up Bill C-30. I'm not interested.

If there is fear about taking this bull by the horns and making decisions about the type of economy and environment we want, then allow opposition members to express those fears. But if there is courage to act upon this and bring forward amendments they have worked on for years, both in government and now in opposition, allow them to bring those amendments forward.

I will move this motion of a work plan, which we see as reasonable, in response to the very environmental groups that Mr. Godfrey and Mr. McGuinty have called upon for support, and I suggest that their concerns can be brought into this. If extra meetings are required within this four-week period as described by the environmental groups, then so be it. We'll stay the extra time. We haven't got a problem with that. But the urgency of this is paramount. Stretching it out some months and months beyond is the equivalent of doing nothing and acting in an irresponsible way.

So I move a motion to accept the proposed work plan and the witnesses that the committee members have been sent.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Could I move a friendly amendment?

**The Chair:** I'm just going to make sure we get this right.

Mr. Warawa.

• (1615)

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** On Mondays it would be from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., and from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. On Wednesdays it would be from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. On Thursdays it would be from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., and 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

It would mean a lot of work in a very short period of time, but we would then be able to achieve the goals that are set out in those timelines and show the urgency of the situation.

Would Mr. Cullen accept that as a friendly amendment? If not, I would make it an amendment.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Most of those times seem appropriate. The only one that might be of concern is the Thursday afternoon slot, but it seems to be open to negotiation. It would depend how other committee members feel about the work. With the quantity of meetings, if committee members are seeking more input, and time is pressing upon us...certainly.

**The Chair:** That's ten hours a week, which is aggressive.

**An hon. member:** It's eleven.

**The Chair:** Is it eleven?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Yes. A three-hour meeting on Wednesday is being proposed.

**The Chair:** Sorry, you're right.

Mr. Holland.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** My first concern—and I'm sure all committee members are the same—is that there's also the preparation that goes into having witnesses. We need to have some time to consider what the witnesses have said, be able to absorb and react to it, and then have follow-up questions. Ramming it all in together in that way is problematic in the least. I would have real reservations about that.

It really begs the question of what we're doing. It is our position that Bill C-30 is largely a very redundant piece of legislation that isn't going to do much on the issue of climate change. If the intent is to move it through with enormous haste, essentially create a placebo policy, and pretend we did something—do it in a rush so we can pretend we did something and hold something out as this placebo that really does nothing....

We can't deal with this as an island. Either we're trying to do something about climate change or we're not. If we're trying to do something about climate change, what is the plan of the government? How does Bill C-30 fit in with the plan of the government? How can we deal with this issue as a one-off or as an isolated incident?

I appreciate, as we all do, that there is work to be done and we want to get results on this issue. I do not want to create something in haste that has no significance or meaning, or doesn't do anything. So

if we're here to really achieve something, then let's do it. Let's first talk about what the plan of the government is, how Bill C-30 fits in with its broader agenda to address climate change, and then debate it in that context. But to deal with it alone is foolhardy.

On dealing with that number of witnesses, I don't know how we would have the time to properly prepare for those witnesses, assimilate what they say, and follow that up with additional witnesses. It's an extremely aggressive schedule, and it smacks to me of just trying to ram this through and not being interested in substantive changes that have to happen to make it effective.

**The Chair:** Just to clarify, Mr. Cullen, did you accept that as a friendly amendment? Then we'll just start discussing that amendment.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Chair, obviously there are concerns being expressed. The only part of the amendment I was unsure of in terms of scheduling, as I said, was the late Thursday meeting. If the four meetings were scheduled, that would work as well, or if that time were moved.

It does speak to the possible facility of a subcommittee to get some of this discussion moving a lot more quickly, but we're here now.

I'll accept the amendment.

• (1620)

**The Chair:** Sorry, Mr. Bigras. I jumped over Mr. Jean before.

Mr. Jean.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to say that we do have a plan. People keep talking about us not having a plan. Here's the plan: it's called Bill C-30, and that was the government's proposal. It's not perfect, and we accept that it's not perfect. It's just like Mr. Cullen's proposed outline, which may not be perfect. That's why we're here, and that's why the government agreed to strike this committee: to hear from all Canadians, through their parliamentarians, and so that we could hear the experience that all people have at this table.

Let's talk about that experience.

Mr. Bigras, we sat together on the environment committee in the 38th Parliament.

Mr. Cullen, we sat together on the environment committee.

Mr. Scarpaleggia, we sat together in the environment committee, and we heard all these witnesses, as did Mr. McGuinty.

Of course, Mr. McGuinty was the chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. I think it was from 1995 to 1999 or something like that, but he certainly has good experience.

Mr. Watson sat with us in the 38th Parliament on the environment committee, and so did Mr. Warawa and I.

We have a huge database and people who have experience with the witnesses we've heard already, but we have to start somewhere. We want to start and we want to accomplish something. That's what this government wants to do. It does want to get results, Mr. Holland. It wants to protect the health of Canadians and clean up the environment, and you've seen that happen through some of the announcements that have been made recently.

What we don't want to do is nothing. We want to get something done, and we need to set a time schedule that may not fit for everybody. This is this government's priority, and we're hoping it is the entire Parliament's priority, to get something done for the health of Canadians. The reality is that we can make this a priority. If we see which people are not interested in pushing it forward and which people are interested in pushing it forward, I'm prepared—and I think you'll find that all government members are prepared—to sit through the March and April breaks so that we can get this done and have a better quality of life for Canadians from one end of this country to the other.

**An hon. member:** Hear, hear.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bigras, then Mr. Scarpaleggia.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Chairman, I would not like us to go too quickly, and I would not like the schedule to be established solely on the basis of an agreement between the NDP and the Conservative Party. It is very important for the schedule to be established by all political parties.

Rather than suggesting days and times, we might perhaps take a look at available time slots, bearing in mind that votes are held on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Perhaps we could also take into account the fact that the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development will continue to sit. In my view, there are a number of things we should take into account before deciding on our future business immediately, as it has been suggested we do. That is the first aspect I would like taken into account. I am quite sure that the clerk will tell us what time slots are available.

The second issue is that of witnesses. I would like to thank Mr. Cullen for his remarks. When we begin our study and establish the list of witnesses, we must of course take into account the testimony that has already been given to avoid duplication. We should agree on a principle. The principle we would support is that the committee should work more intensively on the study of Bill C-30—and that is indeed the spirit of the NDP's proposal. However, I would have great difficulty in supporting the motion moved by the NDP and amended by the Conservative Party, a motion that would rush us and compress the schedule, without knowing exactly what that would involve.

I believe that we can strike a balance between moving quickly and conducting an intensive study. I am among those who believe we can work three days a week on this bill, even though I am not convinced that it will suit me in the end. We can go quickly while hearing as many witnesses as possible, but we should be cautious before approving a schedule that might have a number of consequences, because we failed to take certain factors into account.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Scarpaleggia.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Chair, my question was really to Mr. Cullen regarding his statement that NGOs feel this should be done in four weeks. Did I understand correctly?

•(1625)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I was quoting from a letter they sent to all committee members on January 22.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Obviously we don't have the NGOs here to ask them a question, but first of all I'd like to know why it's four weeks. Is it in order that it be done before the budget? I thought that, but Mr. Jean saying we could meet in April as well suggests that the idea is not necessarily to get this done before the budget. If this issue is so great in the eyes of the government, which it is for the opposition, then maybe the budget can be moved back a couple of weeks to accommodate our attempt to deal properly with this issue.

I would suggest, Mr. Chair, if we want to advance on this, that we get the easy things done first. We agreed to a schedule of days and hours. In terms of the themes and so on, we should maybe work on those after we've heard from the departmental officials who describe the bill to us in its entirety. I don't mean the minister necessarily, because that will bring more political spin to the issue. I'd like an overview of the bill from those who know the bill best. Then we can deal with themes and witnesses and take that kind of rational approach to it.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I appreciate Mr. Scarpaleggia's intention here.

The thing for committee members to remind themselves is that deferral to the government's so-called power on this bill must not be made. The very fact that they sit in minority on this committee allows us the capacity to change what we will. It was accepted prior to second reading. We have not agreed to the intention or the spirit or anything of this bill. In a sense, we have a template before us that we can alter in any way we wish. The reason we chose the themes was because they were based on what this committee has done in the past—working on climate change and these issues. These themes have come up again and again.

In the spirit of Mr. Scarpaleggia's intention to move forward, again, I have this motion before the committee for us to get started. If we get to the third set of witnesses and there's some glaring error and we need to have an extra meeting or make some accommodation, of course we're open and willing to hear those testimonies. But for goodness sake, if Canadians have urgency on this—and we have all spoken with such urgency—then why not accept this as a starting piece?

Let us begin. Let us get into the work and move on, because we are not progressing the fight against climate change at all with this conversation. The conversation needs to be about the substance. We've tried to propose the substance in a fair way. If there are other things that don't fit, then talk to us about it. But to come here with no other work plans or no other amendments—we must start somewhere. We think this is a healthy place to start, and we think we have the support of many outside of this room to do such a thing.

**The Chair:** Mr. McGuinty.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm really pleased to have heard my colleague Mr. Jean a moment ago. It's the clearest statement I've heard in a year about the government's climate change plan.

I just heard two things. I want to make sure, and I'm not being facetious at all, and this is helpful in the context of the journey we're going on. Bill C-30 is the plan—the beginning, the middle, and the end of the plan. You held up a document and said that Bill C-30 is the plan. That's the government's plan on climate change, right? I think I heard that.

Second, I also heard that climate change was now the top priority of the Government of Canada.

• (1630)

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Clean air.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Clean air is the top priority of the Government of Canada.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** You heard it twice, Mr. McGuinty.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Climate change was the top priority for all parliamentarians, I think Mr. Jean also said, as well as for the government. We're getting somewhere. That's very useful; that's very helpful. I'd like to hear more from the government, if it's possible, Mr. Chair, today or in early meetings, as to how the thigh bone connects to the knee bone and the knee bone connects to the leg bone. How, for example, would we deal with one of the amendments put forward by the ENGO community, which is to reduce greenhouse gases by 80%, using 1990 as a baseline, by 2050? That's a very interesting and aggressive target. We're going to want to hear from an awful lot of witnesses on that.

But I need to hear more from the government in terms of how Bill C-30, being the clean air plan, the government's plan, connects to energy policy. How is it going to connect to the government's transport policy plan? How is it going to connect to consumption decreases reannounced last week? We'll agree that perhaps they were jointly founded programs—EnerGuide and a few others, for example—that were reannounced last week. Where does this fit, if we consider that the country has a puzzle-like response, with pieces of the puzzle on the climate change challenge? How does this fit and connect to the other policies of the government?

If we treat this bill in isolation, Mr. Chair—

**The Chair:** Mr. Watson.

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I thought we were supposed to be having a discussion on an amendment to a work plan, not a general discussion. I'd like the discussion to get around to whether or not.... We were talking about

our meeting schedule as an amendment to a work plan, not having a general discussion, Mr. Chair. I'd like to get back to that.

**The Chair:** As a friendly amendment, we're actually discussing the main motion.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** It was accepted as a friendly amendment, then?

**The Chair:** It was accepted as a friendly amendment, so we are discussing the main motion.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess the point I'm trying to raise here is that it would be really helpful for us as legislators to see what the plan looks like when its constituent pieces are put together. Because I would dare submit now, given the state of Bill C-30 and what we might possibly do to it, that this Bill C-30 does not make a climate change plan for this country. It's not even close.

So I need to hear more from the government, from the parliamentary secretary, perhaps through the minister in due course when he shows, how this connects and what part of the puzzle we are dealing with so we can know. When witnesses show up here, trust me, they're going to raise these questions. They're going to ask these questions whether we want them to or not. They're going to be asked to comment or they're going to want to comment themselves on how Bill C-30 does or does not connect to the National Energy Board's recent review of energy policy in the country. They're going to ask how it connects, Mr. Chair, to a fourfold or fivefold potential increase in the oil sands, and that's what I'd like to hear more about.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'm hearing, unless I'm wrong, that we are trying to get to a schedule that will encompass a number of topics that will evolve as we go along. I think that's what I'm hearing it's getting towards.

Mr. Bigras, you're next.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is good that we are having this discussion, but perhaps it would have been better had we adopted the motion on the steering committee right from the outset. At the end of the day, perhaps it is better we do things this way. Furthermore, we can't leave here, even with a steering committee, without a general idea of this committee's mandate, if indeed it is ever struck.

As I said, we want to work intensively. I'm afraid, however, given the number of witnesses we have here, that we won't be able to hear from everybody who wants to be heard, and yet, hearing them all is part of the duty we have to be transparent. If you take a look at the NDP's proposal, I think there's a way we can work out a timetable. We could quite easily hear from witnesses for five weeks, in other words our committee would start with today's witnesses and continue through till the 2nd of March. We could set aside the two recess weeks to give us time to really digest the testimony we will have heard up until that point, and to prepare amendments. When we're back, in the week beginning March 19, we could begin the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-30.

I don't think we'll have the timetable we expected, in other words a study of approximately four months, but we would be giving ourselves five weeks to listen to witnesses and digest the information we will have heard. In the two-week recess, we'd work on any amendments. After the recess, we could start the clause-by-clause consideration. The steering committee, based on this framework, could draw up a list of topics and identify potential witnesses.

I think that that would be a compromise between what some people seem to want to do, that is have Bill C-30 passed quickly, and a very in-depth study which would take us four or five months, which is what some other members would prefer. There is a compromise position we can reach, and in my opinion, that middle ground is what we have got to look for.

• (1635)

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bigras, are you proposing another amendment to the timeline, or was that in the form of a general discussion?

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** It's not a formal suggestion. I'm just throwing the idea out there. If I feel people are receptive to it, I'll propose an amendment in due course, but it might be better for us to have a discussion first.

[English]

**The Chair:** So for now it's just discussion. I'll just remind folks that if we do form a subcommittee, whatever the subcommittee comes up with has to come back to the main committee in any event, so the main committee always has control.

Mr. Warawa.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate the comments from Mr. Bigras. I think it's showing he does want to move forward and is listening to the urgency of the situation. So I appreciate the comments. It's trying to find the middle ground, and I support that, but it's not my motion. It would be Mr. Cullen's motion, and it's his decision as to whether or not that would be considered a friendly amendment.

I think we need to be flexible, too. If we have a target of dealing with Bill C-30 in a timely fashion, and not trying to stall, which I suspect could be interpreted as what's happening here.... If this is moved forward quickly, and, still being flexible, we found that we needed to hear from another group of witnesses and we went into the March break week, I would suggest that we seriously consider it.

At this point I understand, Mr. Bigras, that what you're saying is we now lengthen it two weeks and we have the March break, and before we go clause by clause we give ourselves the chance to digest past information and current information, and then move forward aggressively so at the end of March we would be done. What you're proposing extends it approximately one month, but I think it's a compromise position and still deals with things on the issue of Bill C-30 on an urgent basis. I think it's a good compromise.

Those are my comments.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godfrey.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** I think Mr. Warawa very usefully picked up on a suggestion by Mr. Manning that we need to use the word "flexibility" quite handily. We need to see where we are after the first round of witnesses to give ourselves the possibility to extend, as Mr. Warawa has outlined. We may discover subjects that need further exploration. I want to endorse that concept of flexibility so we're not locked into a notion that we absolutely have to do clause-by-clause after we get back from the March break. It may happen, but....

The other part from Monsieur Bigras....

[Translation]

I have another question to ask him, as two parts of the proposal he just made concern the number of weeks. We still haven't decided on the number of meetings per week, that's another issue. You raised some technical points about our schedule and asked if it was possible to have five meetings per week.

Did you agree to the proposal, that is Mondays from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., or is there some other matter which still hasn't been resolved, in your opinion?

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** I said that there was no way we would settle the number of hours and days issue without knowing exactly what that means. I would feel railroaded today if we had to vote on a motion on the previously amended hours, because I think we would be moving too quickly.

Mr. Cullen's motion is starting to get very appealing. We must make sure we hear as many witnesses as possible within the schedule we adopt. We can hold five hearings to listen to witnesses before the break and then, when we get back on the 19th, we can proceed with clause-by-clause consideration. Working within this framework, the steering committee would be able to make a proposal to the committee based on what is required, and determine whether we sit once, twice, or three times.

It is important we work out acceptable parameters today so that the steering committee will have a framework to work with.

• (1640)

[English]

**The Chair:** I'll just remind everybody that the committee, of course, is the master of its own fate, and if the committee's work is going expeditiously, then it will finish in a certain time. If the committee needs extra time to consider more witnesses or whatever, then that's up to the committee to make that determination at the time. So there is flexibility, because the flexibility is you folks.

Mr. Holland.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** On a practical matter, two of the times suggested coincide with the natural resources committee. They're at the same time. I don't know if any other members of the special legislative committee sit on natural resources, but that would present a problem. It sits on both Mondays and Wednesdays from three to five. I would imagine that natural resources and the environment would be the two most involved in this, so we would want to avoid overlapping those two committees wherever possible. It's my understanding that these times don't interfere with the environment committee, but they do with the natural resources committee.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Chair, I get the sense you're heading toward a resolution on this as a middle ground. I would never suggest you command us. So the notion put forward by Mr. Bigras for the four weeks—he's being lobbied right now, but I know he's determined in his views—is to then bring us into a subcommittee to work through the witnesses. Just to let the committee know, this is going to be the next suggestion I'll be making, to work ourselves through the witnesses. I would see it as a friendly amendment to my motion, so let's vote on this and get it done.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Bigras, did you have a quick comment?

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** The issue Mr. Holland just raised is an interesting point, in that there should not be duplication of committee meetings. Clearly, the legislative committee cannot sit at the same time as the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development. The clerk could clarify issues like the number of meetings, potential scheduling conflicts, etc. What is important for us today would be to determine, if possible, the dates of our first and last meetings.

Basically, we would have five weeks to consider the bill and hear from witnesses, then a two-week break to prepare amendments, and then when we resume we will proceed to clause-by-clause.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm just going to ask the clerk to explain a couple of things so everybody is on the same wavelength with respect to scheduling.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair, just for the clarification of the committee, Standing Order 115 states that "Notwithstanding Standing Order 108 (1)(a), no standing or standing joint committee shall sit at the same time as a legislative committee on a bill emanating from or principally affecting the same department or agency." That was obviously drafted in a way to reduce conflicts and give priority to a legislative committee. So obviously the legislative committee has to decide whether or not it wants to sit at those times, and that would obviously preclude those standing committees from meeting. Right now the environment committee is principally affected, and that's reflected by the schedule, I believe, that Mr. Warawa presented us.

I did put together a list of times when it wouldn't conflict with either the natural resources committee or the transport committee, which sit in the same block, or the environment committee. I can read that out now for the committee, if that's your desire, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Please do.

**The Clerk:** On Monday it's nine to eleven. Obviously there's no conflict there because no committees sit. On Monday evening, there are no conflicts from 5:30 until whatever time it decides on. On Tuesday it's from eleven to one.

● (1645)

**Hon. John Godfrey:** There are no conflicts Monday afternoon at 3:30?

**The Clerk:** There are no conflicts at 5:30 until whatever time the committee decides to sit. From 3:30 to 5:30 there are conflicts. There is no conflict from 5:30 on.

On Tuesday there's no conflict from eleven until whenever, except when certain votes occur in the House. Obviously, the clerk remains flexible in terms of scheduling times. Members are free to come after the votes and that kind of thing, if you decide to have a meeting after votes. Wednesday, the only time without conflict is after 5:30. On Thursday, it would be the same as Tuesday, so from eleven until whenever the committee decides to sit. Obviously, Fridays remain open, but that's up to the committee.

**The Chair:** Did everybody get those numbers in your head?

**The Clerk:** So Monday, nine to eleven and after 5:30; Tuesday from eleven until whenever, precluding votes.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Tuesday, the environment committee meets from eleven to one.

**The Clerk:** So Tuesday it is from nine to eleven, and then from 3:30 on. Wednesday, it's from 5:30 on. Then Thursday, it's the same thing as Tuesday, so from nine to eleven and then from 3:30 on.

**The Chair:** Mr. Jean.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I just want to say how important this is to the government. First of all, we have the parliamentary secretary to Minister of the Environment. I am the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities. And we have the Secretary of State for Agriculture here. It's very important, and it's the number one priority for this government, as far as the other issues go. That's why I'm prepared to sit anytime that's necessary. But I think we might be able to solve this by giving the clerk a mandate and a friendly amendment, if Mr. Cullen would be prepared to accept it.

From my perspective, I would be prepared to have an amendment whereby this committee would meet for no less than eleven hours per week, firstly, and that way we would be started on clause-by-clause no later than March 19, so that we could take this piece of legislation and do what Canadians want us to do, which is to make the air better for them to breathe.

**The Chair:** Okay, we'll come back to that in a second.

Mr. Manning.

**Mr. Fabian Manning:** I'm just trying to nail down the schedule. When you look at it, we're going to have conflicts, if you're talking about the intensity of this committee. I think we're all going to experience conflicts with other committees and other meetings and our other duties here as members of the legislature. The bottom line is there are 168 hours in the week, and we're asked to devote eleven to this particular piece of legislation, which everybody deems to be of an urgent nature. So I think it's necessary that we get a schedule in place before we leave here today so at least we can schedule the rest of our daily activity here on the Hill for the next number of weeks. I'm fine with eleven hours a week, or whatever it takes to do this, but we need to nail down some times here.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Yes, we're working through this right now.

Just for clarity with the parliamentary calendar, Mr. Jean's suggestion—and I think I've heard something similar from Mr. Bigras—is that we have wrapped up with witnesses by March 19.

Or is it prior to that?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** We start clause-by-clause no later than March 19.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** We start clause-by-clause on March 19.

Through you to the clerk, Chair, how many weeks of actual testimony does that give us?

**The Clerk:** That gives us 55 hours.

**The Chair:** It's five weeks, starting today.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** And in the week prior to that, the week of the 12th, would that be sitting during our break? Is the 12th the break?

**The Chair:** There's a two-week break from March 3 to March 18, which is Saturday to Sunday.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** That's a lot.

**The Chair:** If I can, I just suggest again that the flexibility is inherent within the committee. If things are going more quickly, you can get further ahead. If things are going less quickly, obviously you have the flexibility to go longer.

Mr. Godfrey.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** It would be admirable to be doing clause-by-clause by March 19, but that doesn't quite satisfy the suggestion of Mr. Warawa and Mr. Manning, which was that we have to leave ourselves with flexibility should things develop such that we would need to add witnesses not for the sake of adding witnesses, but.... We can aim to do that, but let's not lock ourselves in so that, even if we're not ready for it, we have to do clause-by-clause.

We can put it down as the intention, but I'm just trying to respect what these gentlemen have said in terms of being flexible when we do our survey at the end of the month to see where we are.

• (1650)

**The Chair:** Mr. Warawa.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Mr. Chair, just to clarify my comments on flexibility, I am willing—and I am sure every member of my party is willing—to work as long and as hard as necessary, but there has to be a target. That target, as suggested by Mr. Jean, is that we be done

with the witnesses and begin clause-by-clause no later than March 19.

That comes from a suggestion by Mr. Bigras—and I think it was a good one—that we attempt to finish with the witnesses in time for that two-week March break. That then gives us those two weeks to digest what we've heard and to prepare for clause-by-clause. That was the recommendation, and I think it was a good one.

Within those timeframes, we have to be flexible. I'm suggesting that if we need to meet late into the evening, I would be willing to do that. But we still have to complete testimony and start the clause-by-clause no later than March 19.

It provides closure. It provides evidence that this committee takes climate change seriously and that we are going to act on it. And hopefully no members would be perceived as trying to stall this process.

**The Chair:** Mr. Jean.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** The flexibility that we do have is that we have about 200 hours—the two break weeks in March—and I'm sure all members of this committee would be happy to sit through those break weeks in order for us to start the clause-by-clause on March 19. So we have lots of flexibility. We have no other committees meeting during those two weeks, so I'm sure all Canadians would expect us to get it done by that time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** In the spirit of the conciliatory nature that has overtaken the committee, Chair, I think we can look at extending the witness list.

Clearly, in my first outline that we suggested we had these two weeks of witnesses. We will consider extending that another two weeks and are willing to take that on in terms of workload and the rest, but the amendment I seek is that we report back to the House by March 19.

I hear the comments of the committee, but I believe we need to report back to the House by March 19.

Chair, allow me this. First of all, that's settling on a much less aggressive witness list. We can propose up to five meetings. We just heard from the clerk on the availability of time. There is ample time. To allow that number of weeks with five meetings per week, with potentially four or five witnesses per panel.... That's an extraordinary number of witnesses, and more than we thought originally.

We're making concessions in allowing the committee to live up to what we've just said, which is that we're willing to do the heavy lifting. We've all heard the quips. We've all made them ourselves. Let's do it, then, and report back on March 19.

**An hon. member:** Hear, hear.

**An hon. member:** No.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I have no concept of why not, considering it's accommodating exactly what I've heard from both the Bloc and the Liberals in terms of the need to expand the witness list. I did, okay? Let's allow more witnesses and allow more meetings. Let's do the work and let's get it back.

**The Chair:** We'll need to dispense with the motions on the floor right now, unless you want to withdraw those motions.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** The concession I've just made is the motion I'd like us to consider.

**The Chair:** So just to be clear, you're withdrawing your original motion?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Correct.

**The Chair:** Could you restate the motion? And I expect there will be a bit of discussion on that.

•(1655)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Sure.

**The Chair:** The clerk is just going to check the dates with you so we're all clear.

We're just going to suspend for a couple of minutes while the motion is written out.

If there are targets set, there are targets, but there's still flexibility.

•(1655)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•(1700)

**The Chair:** The meeting is reconvened.

I'll get the clerk to read the new motion, as proposed by Mr. Cullen.

**The Clerk:** Okay. The first section remains the same, week one being a finalized process, a witness list, departmental officials, the minister, and all that stuff.

Weeks two to four now would be from February 5 to March 2, and then it would say "...and the committee continue to sit during the adjournment from March 5 to 16 for clause-by-clause, and that the committee report back to the House no later than March 19."

**The Chair:** Mr. Jean.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I'm just wondering why we have to put in that we would sit to do clause-by-clause during the break week if we already have to have it finished and reported back to the House by March 19. It goes without saying that we will sit until it's done. It was implicit in what you said that you would like to see clause-by-clause done beforehand and in fact reported back to the House beforehand.

I would just say no later than March 19 for that, and that we will sit until it's done.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen, do you have any problem with that?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** No. It's accomplishing the same purpose, following on to what we're hearing from the environment community. It's actually later than they wanted it, but we're making concessions.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**The Clerk:** So the revised motion, then, would read "that the committee hear witnesses from February 5 to March 2, and that the committee report back to the House no later than March 19"—simply.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Does that still meet your aim, Mr. Cullen?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Godfrey.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** Well, I thought we actually had a compromise proposed by Mr. Bigras that allowed us to do a number of things: have enough time for witnesses; a little time for thought, reflection, to think through what good amendments would look like on the basis of that; and then go to clause-by-clause beginning on March 19.

I cannot, for the life of me, see what gains are made by the unrealistic expectation of people sitting at a time when they should be thinking, and actually pulling together something that would be done by the end of March. I find this disrespectful of a serious process. And it's done for whatever motives, which I won't go into.

But if we're going to do this seriously, we have to hear the witnesses, think about it, and come back with the amendments after March break.

**The Chair:** Mr. Jean.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** With respect, Mr. Chair, to you, I can't help this. We've had 13 years, quite frankly, of talking and listening and spending taxpayers' money with no results.

We've heard enough. We've had committee after committee that has heard about and done reports on this particular topic. We need to get some results for Canadians, and we need to do it now. We're already 13 years behind on what the Liberals promised. It's time to get some action done, and this is enough time to do it.

With respect, Mr. Chair, this is not about holding up legislation; this is about the best interest of Canadians, and we need to do something.

•(1705)

**The Chair:** Monsieur Bigras.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** First of all, it may be important to remember the initial suggestions that were made. Without it being stated officially, everyone agreed that the government wanted us to consider the bill quickly because it is urgent to act soon. The government even wanted to complete the study of bill C-30 within a month and a half. The Liberals wanted to do a more in-depth study of the bill, which could have taken another three months, or even four, far longer than what the government proposed.



We need to come to a consensus and adopt a compromise, which would be to study the bill for five weeks and use the two break weeks to digest the testimony we will have heard. If we feel that we need to hear additional witnesses, nothing prevents us from sitting during the break weeks to hear other witnesses and put the finishing touches to our study. These two extra weeks would mean the study would be completed by March 19. This seems like a reasonable compromise to me, and midway between the four months that had been proposed and the government's position, which was a month or a month and a half. Overall, we will have studied the bill for approximately two months.

I would remind the government that we are about to a move to a vote. The government asked the opposition to show some flexibility and some openness. That is what the opposition, the Bloc and the others have done over the last few hours. I hope the government will show some consistency; you wanted to move quickly, and we accepted your arguments, even though we may not necessarily have wanted to. We did so because we believe it is important to accelerate the process and work more intensively.

I hope we will be able to reach a compromise and bring everyone on side, one that will give us the flexibility we need. Otherwise, Mr. Chairman, we will not be able to vote in favour of a motion forcing us to table a report by March 19. It can't just be a difference of two weeks. I don't believe that two weeks' difference should be enough to prevent us from reaching some consensus. Between a three-month difference and two weeks, I think a compromise... We have to be willing to compromise, take this seriously and provide a reasonable timeframe. I think two months is reasonable and acceptable. The government was saying a month and a half a few hours ago, while the Liberals seemed to have a more ambitious plan.

A good compromise has been suggested. The committee should function in this non-partisan way. If we can't compromise now, I really wonder how we will do down the line. Unfortunately, we will have to vote against this motion, and some people will have to explain why the committee failed to come to an agreement on this two-week discrepancy, considering our agenda and the action plan to be considered under bill C-30.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. McGuinty.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** I wasn't going to, but I have to make a couple comments about the speed at which this is apparently supposed to be dealt with and treated.

First I'd like to debunk one of the myths that is constantly the Republican technique refrain of the government about 13 years of inaction. If they want to build trust, faith, and credibility here, they should go back and understand that first of all the Government of Canada ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2002. Secondly, a full year later, when Russia entered into the agreement internationally—

• (1710)

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen has a point of order.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** In the spirit of Mr. McGuinty's comments about not wishing to go down some partisan track, I agree with him that there were inappropriate comments, but a briefing on his government's history is just.... Let's not continue with this.

It was said by the government chairs...and I disagreed with the use of partisan attacks or records being brought forward. I don't think it serves us or Mr. McGuinty to continue discussing the merits of what Liberal plan was brought forward, and when Russia ratified Kyoto.

**An hon. member:** It's not a point of order.

**The Chair:** It's a point of debate. In the interest of moving it forward and trying to maintain some non-partisanship here, I would like to get back to debating the motion itself, if we could do that.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** I'm trying to make progress. Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm not going to get into tit-for-tat, because it's not worth it. What I'm trying to point out here is that it took time. In three weeks of hearings, three weeks of witnesses.... Is that what we're contemplating now for March 19, to report back with amendments and clause-by-clause?

**A voice:** Sixty witnesses, a maximum of one hundred.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** The best way I can illustrate it is to give by example a process that was done by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy some years ago, a climate change forum, so that you get a sense of the kind of time it took 30 members of the Order of Canada to listen to experts and to deal with some of the design features of our response nationally and internationally.

That process lasted several months, and those members of the Order of Canada had the benefit of hearing from experts eight to ten hours a day, for several days—many, many days at once—two or three days and then a break, then two or three days and then a break, and so on. I think there were five sessions in total. It was limited to 35 experts, but they were speaking about climate change in its entirety. We're not going on that great a journey. But I think we should be very careful trying to circumscribe the debate and perhaps even censor the debate by trying to cap it too early.

I think there's a perfectly reasonable middle ground here to give us the time to hear from the witnesses, to draft amendments and take them forward, and then go through clause-by-clause. I'm not sure why there is the rush here for March 19. Is this a budget deadline? Is this a pre-budget submission that we're looking towards? Can someone help me understand why March 19? Why not March 17 at 12 noon? Can we give ourselves an appropriate amount of time here so we can do our work and hear from people? We're not talking about six months. We're not even talking about three months. We're talking about how many weeks, to the end of March—six weeks?

After a year of silence from the government on the issue, I don't think it's a bad thing, six weeks.

**The Chair:** Mr. Watson.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Mr. Chair, I'd like to call the question. I'm asking for a recorded vote.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, in committee you do have to allow debate to go on, but I would encourage getting to that stage at some point here fairly quickly.

At the moment, we have two more members who wish to speak.

Mr. Scarpaleggia.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** I have a simple question for Mr. Jean and a simple question for Mr. Cullen. I'd like them to tell me why it has to be the 19th. Is this political gamesmanship? We have a choice here, a fork in the road, and I'd like them to say it for the record.

We have a fork in the road. We do something for political reasons or we take the time to reflect, even if it's just another two weeks, to get it right. That's the choice.

**The Chair:** Mr. Warawa, you're on the board here.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Mr. Chair, I too would like to call the question.

**The Chair:** Is there debate? Do we need to review that motion one more time?

We'll call the question.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** No, there was a question put about numbers of witnesses and such. Just so people at the committee understand, the way Parliament works, this committee essentially can override any other committee. But even not doing that, we have the availability of many hours of witnesses. But even going just on three weeks, under the proposal we've put forward, allows for approximately 60 witnesses. If we chose to take a more aggressive weekly schedule, we could get up to 100 witnesses, almost include everything that has been suggested, which I don't think is a good idea, but just to put that into context for people as to the thoroughness that we are contemplating for this law.

• (1715)

**The Chair:** Mr. Holland.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** I appreciate that we have time for witnesses. Can you tell us how much time we would have, after those witnesses speak, to prepare amendments and be able to put those amendments together? How much time does this work plan allot for the development of amendments and consideration of what the witnesses have told us?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** There's an interesting thing in this, Mr. Chair, in that it's coming from Mr. Holland's benches, a government that, when in power, said they had a plan ready to meet Kyoto. And that's just a claim I've put forward in terms of substantive changes to the law of Canada required, budgetary or otherwise.

I would assume there is substance behind that claim. That substance could fall into amendments, I imagine, quite readily. If claims are being made by members around this committee for two things, urgency and capacity, and each party has made various claims on Kyoto and our abilities to meet it, then I assume they've done the legwork on it in their green plan that was issued when they were in government and in Mr. Dion's statements since in terms of confidence in meeting Kyoto objectives. Those are the amendments that the NDP have put forward and made public. If committee members have chosen not to do that or their parties have chosen not to do that work, then they have a lot of work ahead of them.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godfrey.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** I'm just really trying to understand. There are three things in play. One is the number of weeks we're going to

take. Clearly, on this side, up to a certain point—the point being in the corner—there's a feeling that a reasonable compromise between going long and going short is the one we had previously agreed to, which would have us begin clause-by-clause on March 19. I think we will stick to that. Whatever the other two parties choose to do about it, they will live by the consequences of that.

I take it that we're not now debating the particular days and hours. That's a separate matter, is it? And we are also not debating the format of the meetings. There is a proposal here, but I have suggested informally a more fulsome proposal, which I think would be more useful, one proposed by the NGO community. So that is a separate discussion, I am assuming, which we have not yet come to but will have to in a future meeting.

Today this discussion is strictly about the weeks.

**The Chair:** The motion is what we are supposed to be discussing here.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** I'll call the question again, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** A recorded vote. We'll reread the motion.

**The Clerk:** Okay. The motion is that week one, from January 29 to February 2, include finalizing the process and witness list and hearing from departmental officials—Environment, Health, NRCan—Minister of the Environment, Minister of Health. Weeks two to five are February 5 to March 2, and the committee will report back to the House no later than March 19.

**The Chair:** The vote is tied. Now we come to the first tiebreak.

According to Marleau and Montpetit,

The Chair is not bound to give reasons for voting. By convention, the Chair will normally vote in such a way as to maintain the status quo or, when no further discussion on the matter is possible, to keep the matter open for further discussion in the committee or at a subsequent proceeding in the House.

Therefore I'm voting against the motion.

(Motion negated: nays 7; yeas 6)

• (1720)

**The Chair:** The floor is open for other suggestions or motions.

Mr. Godfrey.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** I propose that we go back to the plan that we originally agreed on: that we hear witnesses until March 2, that we take the two-week break to reflect on amendments, and that we begin our work on clause-by-clause on March 19.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Well, not to predict future votes, but to me Mr. Godfrey's proposal is not acceptable. I think the notion I brought forward in terms of a proposal to have a subcommittee decide this is a valid one for this committee to consider in terms of our having some ability to get to a work plan. We're drawing near the time of two hours to decide on a work plan. It seems to me that ending up inevitably or potentially at a tie vote, with a potential continuation of discussion by the chair, does not serve us well.

If the committee is hoping to compromise.... We've all been on committees where subcommittees have been struck and work very effectively—the environment committee, for instance, in the last session.

So I make my intention known, as I have before, in terms of this proposal by Mr. Godfrey. I will be suggesting that we move a subcommittee so that we can sort this out and allow Canadians some sense of hope that we're getting something done.

**The Chair:** On this motion for now, Mr. Warawa.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** I would like to make a friendly amendment.

The concern I have is that this be done in a timely fashion. I was hoping for a quicker resolve to this. Mr. Cullen's suggestion, which was just defeated, I think was a form of compromise, but unfortunately it did not pass. The suggestion now is that we deal with clause-by-clause beginning on March 19. I'm going to ask for the mover to accept a friendly amendment that we have closure at a known date. I would suggest that one week later would be reasonable. Instead of March 19 for closure, it would be one week later, March 26. We could be assured that it would be no later.

So through you, Mr. Chair, would the mover accept a friendly amendment that it be reported back to the House no later than March 26?

**Hon. John Godfrey:** No. It may well be that we're done by then, but this is not a short bill. We're not going to drag it out, but I don't want to tie our hands if it turns out that we're into....

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Then I would move that as an amendment, Mr. Chair, and would like to speak to it.

**The Chair:** Would you repeat the amendment?

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** The motion states that we would begin clause-by-clause on March 19. My amendment would be that Bill C-30 be reported back to the House no later than March 26, which is a week later.

Mr. Chair, we need to have a good, healthy clause-by-clause discussion, but I'm quite concerned about what might be perceived as stall tactics going on here. There is an urgency to get this back to the House. Is a week adequate? Absolutely. The work can be done. Hopefully we can even complete this before then. March 26 would be the absolute latest it would have to be reported back.

So in terms of eliminating the opportunity for anybody to think that there are going to be stall tactics here, I think this is a healthy amendment.

• (1725)

**The Chair:** Mr. Bigras, on the amendment.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Chairman, I sense some openness on the part of the government, but we need to be fully aware of what we are about to agree on. That would mean that we would move to clause-by-clause consideration on the 19th and so we would have approximately one week to complete that exercise. However, in my opinion, we should give adequate consideration to each suggestion and to each amendment, in committee. If there were to be a number of amendments forcing us to extend the one-week period, these amendments would automatically be voted upon without debate.

I would like to ask the clerk for some clarification. Supposing a number of amendments were submitted and we had reached the last meeting. I would like to know what would happen to those amendments we would not have the time to consider. Would they be voted upon without debate?

We ought to be very careful, because we will have heard from witnesses, there will have been suggestions made. I would like some clarification as to what would happen if we did not have the time to consider everything.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay, I'll point out again that whatever is voted on becomes a resolution of the committee. The committee can modify those resolutions if, when the time comes, they require modification, which will obviously entail more discussion. But I have a feeling we're going to have a fair amount of discussion over the next couple of months in any event. So ultimately nothing is cast in stone.

Mr. Jean.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Can I ask for some advice from the clerk?

[English]

**The Chair:** Monsieur Bigras, the answer was that whatever is passed is a resolution of the committee, which the committee can modify. So if the committee gets to the 26th and we're only halfway through the clause-by-clause, then it's up to the committee to carry on or not. The committee is the master of its own fate.

Mr. Jean.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I was waiting until Mr. Bigras was done. I think it's important that all members hear this before we go to another vote.

Yes, Mr. Bigras, I also wanted to make the point that we need an end date. We need to make sure that this is not going to be filibustered to some time in 2009. I think this compromise is reasonable in the circumstances—to have it reported back to the House by the 26th—and the committee's not bound by today's decision in the future.

The majority of members can make a change, and obviously we have to vote on the legislation—on each bill and each section.

But do remember this as well: that for a normal committee clause-by-clause is not one but two and a half to three weeks of time. So it's eleven hours, if we go by the schedule Mr. Cullen has suggested, and certainly we can extend either the hours or the timeframe. But I think we need a timeframe for reporting back to the House, so that Canadians can expect to get results on this.

**The Chair:** Mr. Manning.

**Mr. Fabian Manning:** I'll speak to the amendment, Mr. Chair. We have a very aggressive schedule here, with our proposed hours for the hearings. We have a two-week break in March, then we come back on the 19th to try to have an end date of the 26th. I think this is a positive move.

Also, contrary to what Mr. Godfrey said earlier, I think Canadians expect us to be able to sit and think at the same time. So it's important that we put all our efforts into eleven hours a week here, with a schedule over the five-week period. We can accomplish a fair bit and still be able to report back to the House on the 26th.

I think the scheduling proposed by the member opposite is something we can all work to. If we reach the two-week break, starting on March 2, and see that we need extra time, as we said earlier, we're willing to sit through the March break to have this back to the House by the 26th.

• (1730)

**The Chair:** Mr. Scarpaleggia.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Chair, we've been quite clear in telling the committee that we have no intention of dragging this out until June, or until 2009. However, I will not accept that members opposite hold a gun to my head, as a member of Parliament, and say that you have to be finished by the 26th and these are the rules of the game. I cannot accept this as a member of Parliament.

**The Chair:** Mr. Holland and then Mr. Bigras.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Further to that, again, I have no interest in doing anything but moving through it expeditiously.

One of the things that is interesting to note, from a procedural standpoint, is that if the committee were to agree to an end date of the 26th, and then the opposition members—the six on this side—decided we wanted an extension, the chair's vote would go in favour of the status quo, which means that if we needed a few extra days we would lose the opportunity to be able to carry that. Effectively, if we support that now, the six of us are essentially giving up the ability to extend it later. It's a clever bit of procedural trickery, but it's not something we're going to fall for. The idea that we would be given one week and we would forgo additional items we want to work on is certainly not something I'm going to support.

I think it's fair to say we're willing to move this process forward in a timely and fair fashion. We should have some degree of trust in that. If it starts at any point being protracted—God forbid it should take two weeks—then it would certainly be the ability of any committee member to move a motion to wind things down and report to the House.

I would certainly think we would much rather err on the side of being able to have proper debate on amendments that might be put before us rather than being put in a position where we're given one week to debate any amendment that comes forward, no matter what its complexity or what happens through the witness process.

It's ridiculous to me that we would put ourselves in that position. It's absolutely unthinkable that I would vote for that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I apologize to Mr. Scarpaleggia for speaking out of turn during his testament.

I will remind members of this committee that we supported an exact same procedure for Bill C-288. We had a date to report back. There was no concern at the time for any of the ridiculous trickery that Mr. Holland is proposing. We put a specific time, and I voted to have a firm time. We didn't want to drag it into Christmas or have

this go on. I know the Liberals were very concerned about that. I believe the Bloc and the NDP both voted for that amendment. We are considering using the same tactic. If it wasn't ridiculous then, it certainly isn't ridiculous now.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bigras.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** From what I gather, Mr. Chairman, the government is intent on finishing by March 26. That seems rather clear to me. My motion referred to a two-week period for the drafting of amendments. Why not shorten that period? We could start hearing from witnesses straightaway or over the next few days and put an end to the hearings on March 2. Over our break week, we could draft the amendments. We could begin clause-by-clause on March 12 and complete it by March 26.

I think that may be an interesting idea. Two weeks was perhaps a bit long for the drafting of amendments. We could begin clause-by-clause consideration a week earlier than suggested. During the weeks of March 12 and March 19, we could move to clause-by-clause. That would give us two weeks to do so.

• (1735)

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bigras, if that's a distinct motion, or it will be, we're dealing with the existing motion first.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** I could recall mine. Let Mr. Bigras' amendment stand and I will withdraw mine.

**The Chair:** So you're withdrawing your amendment.

Mr. Bigras, you're proposing that as an amendment. Again, we'll get the clerk to confirm the wording.

Please read the main motion and the amendment.

**The Clerk:** The main motion from Mr. Godfrey is that the committee hear witnesses until March 2, that the two-week break be used to formulate amendments, and that the committee begin clause-by-clause the week of March 19.

The amendment from Mr. Bigras is changing the two-week break to one week, so that the week from March 5 to 9 be used to draft amendments, and that clause-by-clause begin on March 12 to report back to the House no later than March 26.

**The Chair:** Any further discussion on the amendment?

Mr. Holland.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Again, the only point I would make on this—and I appreciate it wouldn't be a consideration for everybody but it is a consideration for me—is I have three children. I don't have a lot of time with my three children and that is the March break for my children and I was hoping to do something with them. Again, that may not be a problem for everybody at the committee, but that is a problem for me. I was planning on doing something with them over that break. So I'd ask that people consider that when they're doing this. I appreciate that some people may be in Ottawa or not have young families, but those of us who try to manage the priorities of this job with personal expectations have to have a life in this process as well.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I appreciate Mr. Holland's concerns.

A couple of options seem available with this amendment being considered. One, and I know it's not necessarily favourable, is that other people from the party occupy your place during that clause-by-clause period that one week. I know that might not be favourable, but it is one to be considered. The second is if we allow more witnesses to be heard earlier on, that would move the schedule around. But making a calendar by committee is one of the most awkward processes it's possible to go through, and we're choosing to go through it. I remind people that there is an option of doing a subcommittee that may allow us greater expediency in this, rather than trying to pick dates that work with all 12 or 13 of us.

• (1740)

**The Chair:** Mr. Watson.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have four kids myself, ages two through nine. I can certainly appreciate the concerns of the member opposite. What I keep in mind is that at the end of the day, this is for my kids.

**A voice:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** So some flexibility.... My kids are resilient. I think they'll certainly understand that Dad wants to do something for them in the long term. So I think this is a good amendment. I hope we can call the question on this soon enough and get on with doing the business of the country. That's the real importance here.

**The Chair:** Mr. Godfrey.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** We're trying to reconcile the long and the short and make sure there is an end point.

If we say that the amendments have to be brought to the House no later than April 2, understanding that they could go in before that, that allows two weeks for the proper preparation of the amendments. We'll probably be done before then, but we'll have allowed ourselves that flexibility. Then we'll have an absolute certainty that it will be a two-month process.

**Mr. Fabian Manning:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, the House is not sitting in the first two weeks of April.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** All right, so we'll make it no later than March 30. It may be done before then—before the end of the fiscal year.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bigras.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Chairman, as I myself have a nine-year-old daughter whom I love very much, I can say that I understand my colleagues' perspective. They have a compelling argument. We are not about to start publicly negotiating our children's break weeks.

I see the 30th as a good compromise. It would be an extra four days, but we can be flexible on this. It is a far cry from the number of months the Liberals seemed to suggest a few hours ago. I think we should be able to come to some agreement here.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bigras, is that a...?

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** I would not make any motions I was not sure would pass.

[English]

**The Chair:** Are you taking that as a friendly amendment to your amendment?

**Hon. John Godfrey:** I would certainly take it as a friendly amendment if we say that we will start clause-by-clause on March 19 and report back no later than March 30.

[Translation]

Does this amendment suit you?

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Yes, I think that would be acceptable.

I never thought today's negotiations would go this far.

• (1745)

[English]

**The Chair:** Monsieur Bigras, are you withdrawing your amendment and accepting that as a friendly amendment?

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Yes.

[English]

**The Chair:** The clerk is going to read the motion as amended one more time.

**The Clerk:** The motion reads:

That the committee hear witnesses until March 2; that the two-week break be used to formulate amendments; and that the committee begin clause-by-clause consideration during the week of March 19, in order to report back to the House no later than March 30.

**The Chair:** The question is on the main motion as amended by the friendly amendment.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 1)

**The Chair:** That wasn't so tough, was it?

Now we need to decide on which days we want to sit.

Mr. Warawa.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Mr. Cullen has brought up the issue of a steering committee a number of times during this meeting. I would be open to that. I think it would be a better use of our time.

The two issues are when do we schedule meetings, and who should we have as witnesses? I think a steering committee would be much more efficient, made up of one member from each party, with you as the chair. I would appreciate hearing comments from Mr. Cullen, because he's the one who brought it up initially.

**The Chair:** Are you proposing a motion?

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** As I say, Mr. Cullen brought it up, so I'd like to hear from him. Maybe he'd like to make a motion.

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** There's a need, despite delays, to accomplish something at this process. The use of a subcommittee can be very effective in setting out calendars and timelines and, with the help of the clerk, settle on the witnesses in a priority fashion.

In that subcommittee we can also establish appropriate themes for the types of discussions we need to have. It's in everyone's orders of the day that we have a motion for a subcommittee.

**The Chair:** So you're proposing that?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** That's the motion I'm putting forward now.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** On a point of order, could the mover provide the makeup of the motion?

• (1750)

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I haven't because this is a pretty standard constitution used by the House for subcommittees. The primary one

is that there's a member from each of the opposition parties, a member from the government, and the chair.

**The Chair:** As long as that's the way we wind up and everybody's happy with that, it does not need to be part of the motion.

So the motion as proposed by Mr. Cullen is that a steering committee be formed to give guidance to the committee on procedure and witnesses.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** It's unanimous. You have to be pleased with that.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** When will the steering committee begin to meet so the committee can make recommendations back to the main committee at our next available meeting? Can I suggest that we meet later today?

**The Chair:** Each party will pick their member. Again, I throw it out to the committee. I'm merely your servant. We'll advise you tonight.

Does eight o'clock or nine o'clock tomorrow work for folks? It's open to the committee for suggestions.

**The Clerk:** I will check the availability of committee rooms when I get back to the office and send out a notice forthwith.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** We'd better give you some phone numbers so you can get in touch with people.

**The Clerk:** We can do that after the committee meeting.

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.

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